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A NOVEL.

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HALF A MILLION OF MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

Despatches from Italy.

"I LOVE this terrace," said Miss Colonna; "it is so like the terrace of an Italian house."

"I am always glad, for that reason, when the spring is sufficiently advanced to let us put out the orange trees," replied Lord Castletowers.

It was shortly after breakfast, and they had all strolled out through the open windows. The tide of guests had ebbed away some days since, and the party was once more reduced to its former numbers.

"Yes," said Olimpia, "the dear old orange trees and the terra cotta vases go far to heighten the illusion — so long as one avoids looking back at the house."

"Or round upon the landscape," suggested Saxon, smiling; "for these park trees are as English as the architecture of the house. What is the style, Castletowers?"

"Oh! I don't know. Elizabethan — Tudor — English-Gothic. I suppose they all mean the same thing. Shall I cut down my poor old oaks, Miss Colonna, and plant olives and poplars in their place?"

"Yes, if you will give me the Sabine for the Surrey hills, and an Italian sky over head."

"I would if I could — I wish it were possible," said Castletowers, earnestly.

"Nay, I always see them," replied Olimpia, with a sigh. "I see them now — so plainly!"

"But you Italians never have the *mal de pays*," said Saxon.

"How can you tell that, Mr. Trefalden? I think we have."

"No, no. You love your Italy; but you do not suffer in absence as we suffer. The true *mal de pays* runs in no blood but the Swiss."

"You will not persuade me that you love Switzerland better than we love Italy," said Olimpia.

"But I believe we do," replied Saxon. "Your *amor patriæ* is, perhaps, a more intellectual passion than ours. It is bound up with your wonderful history, your pride of blood and pride of place; but I cannot help believing that we Swiss do actually cherish a more intense feeling for our native soil."

"For the soil?" repeated Castletowers.

"Yes, for the clay beneath our feet, and the peaks above our heads. Our mountains are as dear to us as if they were living things, and could love us back again. They enter into our inner consciousness. They exercise a subtle influence upon our minds, and upon our bodies through our minds. They are a part of ourselves."

"Metaphorically speaking," said the Earl.

"Their effects are not metaphorical," replied Saxon.

"What are their effects?"

"What we were speaking of just now, the *mal de pays* — the sickness in absence."

"But that is a sickness of the mind," said Olimpia.

"Not at all. It is a physical malady."

"May one inquire how it attacks the patient?" asked the Earl, incredulously.

"Some are suddenly stricken down, as if by a *coup de soleil.* Some fade slowly away. In either case, it is the inexpressible longing, for which there is no cure save Switzerland."

"And supposing that your invalid cannot get away — what then?"

"I fear he would die."

The Earl laughed aloud.

"And I fear he would do nothing of the kind," said he. "Depend on it, Trefalden, that is one of those pretty fictions that everybody believes, and nobody can prove."

"My dear Gervase," said Lady Castletowers, passing the little group as she returned to the house, "Signor Colonna is waiting to speak to you."

Colonna was leaning over the balustrade at the farther end of the terrace, reading a letter. He looked up as the Earl approached, and said, eagerly.

"A despatch from Baldiserotti! Garibaldi has sailed from Genoa in the *Piemonte*, and Bixio in the *Lombardo.* The sword is drawn at last, and the scabbard thrown away!"

The Earl's face flushed with excitement.

"This is great news," said he. "When did it come?"

"With the other letters; but I waited to tell it to you when your mother was not present."

"Does Vaughan know?"

"Not yet. He went to his room when he left the breakfast table, and I have not seen him since."

"What is the strength of the expedition?"

"One thousand and sixty-seven."

"No more?"

"Thousands more; but they have at present no means of transport. This is but an advanced guard of tried men; chiefly old Cacciatori. Genoa is full of volunteers, all eager to embark."

"I would give ten years from my life to be among them," said Castletowers, earnestly.

The Italian laid his hand caressingly upon the young man's arm.

"*Pazienza, caro,*" he replied. "You do good service here. Come with me to my room. There is work for us this morning."

The Earl glanced towards Olimpia and Saxon; opened his lips as if to speak; checked himself, and followed somewhat reluctantly.

CHAPTER II.

A Broken Promise.

It must be conceded that Miss Colonna had not made the most of her opportunities. She had not actually withdrawn from the game; but she had failed to follow up her first great move so closely as a less reluctant player might have done. And yet she meant to act this part which she had undertaken. She knew that, if she did so, it must be at the sacrifice of her own peace, of her own womanly self-respect. She was quite aware, too, that it involved a cruel injustice to Saxon Trefalden. But with her, as with all enthusiasts, the greater duty included the less; and she believed that, although it would be morally wrong to do

these things for any other end, it would be practically right to do them for Italy.

If she could not bring herself to lead this generous heart astray without a struggle — if she pitied the young man's fate, and loathed her own, and shrunk from the path that she was pledged to tread — she did so by reason of the finer part of her nature, but contrary to her convictions of duty. For to her, Italy was duty; and when her instinctive sense of right stepped in, as it had stepped in now, she blamed herself bitterly.

But this morning's post had brought matters to a crisis. Her father's face, as he handed her the despatch across the breakfast table, told her that; and she knew that if she was ever to act decisively, she must act so now. When, therefore, she found herself alone with Saxon on the terrace, she scarcely paused to think how she should begin, but plunged at once into her task.

"You *must* not think we love our country less passionately than the Swiss, Mr. Trefalden," she said, quickly. "It needs no *mal de pays* to prove the heart of a people; and when you know us better, you will, I am sure, be one of the first to acknowledge it. In the meanwhile, I cannot be happy till I convince you."

"I am glad you think me worth the trouble of convincing," replied Saxon.

"How should I not? You are a patriot, and a republican."

"That I am, heart and soul," said Saxon, with sparkling eyes.

"We ought to have many sympathies in common."

"Why, so we have. We have many. The love of country and the love of liberty are sympathies in common."

"They should be," replied Olimpia; "but, alas! between prosperity and adversity there can be little real fellowship. Yours, Mr. Trefalden, is the happiest country in Europe, and mine is the most miserable."

"I wish yours were not so," said Saxon.

"Wish, instead, that it may not remain so. Wish that women's tears and brave men's blood may not be shed in vain; nor a whole people be trodden back into slavery for want of a little timely help in the moment of their utmost need?"

"What do you mean?" said Saxon, catching something of her excitement, without knowing why or wherefore.

"I mean that the work to which my father's whole life has been given is at last begun. You know — all the world knows — that Sicily is in arms; but you have not yet been told that an army of liberation is assembling in the north."

"In the north? Then the king of Sardinia —"

"Victor Emmanuel is willing enough to reap the harvest watered with our blood," replied Miss Colonna, impetuously; "but he will not offer us even a hearty 'God-speed' at present. No, Mr. Trefalden, ours is an army of volunteers and patriots only — an army of young, brave, and generous hearts that love Italy and liberty, and are ready to die for what they love!"

Beautiful as she was at all times, Saxon had never seen Olimpia Colonna look so beautiful as when she spoke these words. He almost lost the sense of what she said, in his admiration of how she looked while

saying it. He stammered something unintelligible, and she went on.

"Garibaldi has sailed for Palermo with an advanced guard. Volunteers are pouring into Genoa from Venice and Milan. Subscriptions are being raised on all hands — in England, in France, in Belgium, in America. A month hence, and South Italy will be free, or doubly chained. In the meanwhile we need help; and for that help we look to every lover of liberty. You are a lover of liberty — you are a citizen of a model republic. What will you do for us?"

"Tell me what to do, and I will do it," said Saxon.

"Nay; I might ask too much."

"You cannot ask more than I will gladly grant."

Olimpia turned her dazzling smile upon him.

"Beware;" said she. "I may take you at your word. This cause, remember, is more to me than life; and the men who enlist in it are my brothers."

Alas! for Saxon's invulnerability, and his cousin's repeated cautions! Alas! for his promises, his good resolves, and his government stock! He was so far gone, that he would have shouldered a musket and stepped into the ranks at that moment to please Miss Colonna.

"These men," she continued, "want everything that goes to make a soldier — save valour. They are content to accept privation; but they can neither live without food, nor fight without arms, nor cross from shore to shore without means of transport. So take heed Mr. Trefalden, how you offer more than you are prepared to give. I might say — do you love liberty

well enough to supply some thousands of brave men with bread, ships, and muskets? And then, what would be your answer?"

Saxon drew a blank cheque from his purse, and laid it on the parapet against which she was leaning. He would have knelt down and laid it at her feet in open day, but that he had sense enough left to feel how supremely ludicrous the performance would be.

"There is my answer," he said.

Miss Colonna's heart gave a great leap of triumph, and the colour flashed up into her face. She took a tiny pencil-case from her watch-chain — a mere toy of gold and jewels — and hastily pencilled some figures in the corner of the cheque.

"Will you do this for Italy?" she said, in a breathless whisper.

"I will double it for *you!*" replied Saxon, passionately.

"For me, Mr. Trefalden?"

Saxon was dumb. He feared he had offended her. He trembled at his temerity, and did not dare to lift his eyes to her face.

Finding he made no answer, she spoke again, in a soft, tremulous tone, that would have turned the head of St. Kevan himself.

"Why for me? What am I that you should do more for me than my country?"

"I — I would do anything for you," faltered Saxon.

"Are you sure of that?"

"As sure as that I——"

He checked himself. He would have said, "as that I love you," but he lacked courage to pro-

nounce the words. Miss Colonna knew it, however, as well as if he had spoken the words.

"Would you jump into the sea for me, like Schiller's diver?" she asked, with a sudden change of mood, and a laugh like a peal of silver bells.

"That I would!"

"Or in among the fighting lions, like the Count de Lorge?"

"I know nothing about the Count de Lorge, but I would do for you all that a brave man dare do for a fair lady," replied Saxon, boldly.

"Thanks," she said, and her smile became graver as she spoke. "I think you mean what you say."

"I do. Indeed I do!"

"I believe it. Some day, perhaps, I shall put you to the proof."

With this, she gave him her hand, and he — scarcely knowing what he did, but feeling that he would cheerfully march up to a battery, or jump out of a balloon, or lie down in the path of an express train for her sake — kissed it!

And then he was so overwhelmed by the knowledge of what he had done, that he scarcely noticed how gently Miss Colonna withdrew her hand from his, and turned away.

He watched her across the terrace. She did not look back. She went thoughtfully forward, thoughtfully and slowly, with her hands clasped loosely together, and her head a little bent; but her bearing was not that of a person in anger. When she had passed into the house, Saxon drew a deep breath, stood for a moment irresolute, and presently swung himself lightly over the parapet, and plunged into the park.

His head was in a whirl; and he wandered about for the first half-hour or so, in a tumult of rapturous wonder and exultation — and then he suddenly remembered that he had broken his promise to William Trefalden!

In the meanwhile, Olimpia went up to her father's study in the turret, and stood before him, pale and stern, like a marble statue of herself.

Colonna looked up, and pushed his papers aside.

"Well," he said eagerly, "what speed?"

"This."

Saying which, she took a pen, deliberately filled in double the sum pencilled on the margin, and laid Saxon's cheque before him on the table.

CHAPTER III.

The Cause of Liberty.

Had Saxon been suddenly plunged into a cold bath, it could scarcely have brought him to his senses more rapidly than did the remembrance of his broken pledge, and the thought of what his lawyer cousin would say to him.

"It isn't as if he hadn't cautioned me, either," said he, half aloud, as he sat himself down, "quite chopfallen," at the foot of a great oak, in an unfrequented hollow of the park. And then one unpleasant recollection evoked another, and he remembered how William Trefalden had jested with him about fetters of flowers, and made him almost angry by so doing; and how he had boasted of himself as more in-

vulnerable than Achilles. He also remembered that his cousin had especially inquired whether he had not yet been called upon to subscribe to the Italian fund, and had given him much good advice as to what his conduct should be when that emergency might arise. To put his name down for a moderate sum, and commit himself to nothing further — those were William Trefalden's instructions to him; but how had he observed them? How had he observed that other promise of signing no more large cheques without consulting his cousin; and what reliance would his cousin place upon his promises in the future?

Saxon groaned in spirit as he thought of these things; and the more he thought of them, the more uncomfortable he became.

He did not care in the least about the money, although he had, in truth, been mulcted of an enormous sum; but he cared a great deal about breaking his word, and he saw that it must be broken on the one hand or the other. He also saw on which hand it was to be.

He had given the cheque to Miss Colonna, and Miss Colonna must have the money; there was clearly no help for that. But then he entertained misgivings as to the cheque itself, and began to doubt whether he had anything like balance enough at his banker's to meet it. In this case, what was to be done? The money, of course, must be got; but who was to get it, and how was the getting of it to be achieved? Would that mysterious process called "selling out" have to be gone through?

Saxon puzzled his brains over those abstruse financial questions till his head ached, but could make no-

thing of them. At last he came to the very disagreeable conclusion that William Trefalden was alone capable of solving the difficulty, and must be consulted without delay; but at the same time, he did not feel at all sure that his cousin might not flatly refuse to help him in the matter. This was a fearful supposition, and almost drove the young fellow to despair. For Saxon loved the lawyer in his simple honest way — not so much, perhaps, for any lovable qualities that he might imagine him to possess, as for the mere fact that his cousin was his cousin, and he trusted him. He had also a vague idea that William Trefalden had done a great deal to serve him, and that he owed him a profound debt of gratitude. Anyhow, he would not offend him for the universe — and yet he was quite resolved that Miss Colonna should have the full benefit of her cheque.

Thinking thus, he remembered that he had authorised her to double the amount. What if she should take him at his word?

"By Jove, then," said he, addressing a plump rabbit that had been gravely watching him from a convenient distance for some minutes past, "I can't help it, if she does. The money's my own, after all, and I have the right to give it away, if I choose. Besides, I've given it in the cause of liberty!"

But his heart told him that liberty had played a very unimportant part in the transaction.

CHAPTER IV.

A Council of War.

In the meanwhile, a general council was being held in the octagon turret. The councillors were Signor Colonna, Lord Castletowers, and Major Vaughan, and the subjects under discussion were Baldiserotti's despatch and Saxon Trefalden's cheque.

The despatch was undoubtedly an important one, and contained more stirring news than any which had transpired from Italy since the Napoleonic campaign; but that other document, with its startling array of numerals, was certainly not less momentous. In Major Vaughan's opinion it was the more momentous of the two; and yet his brow darkened over it, and it seemed to the two others that he was not altogether so well pleased as he might have been.

Castletowers was genuinely delighted, and as much surprised as delighted.

"It is a noble gift," said he. "I had not dreamed that Trefalden was so staunch a friend to the cause."

"I was not aware that Mr. Trefalden had hitherto interested himself about Italy in any way," observed Major Vaughan, coldly.

"Well, he has interested himself now to some purpose. Besides, he has but just come into his fortune."

Signor Colonna smoothed the cheque as it lay before him on the desk, filled in the date, crossed it, and inserted his own name as that of the person to whom it was payable.

"I wonder what I had better do with it," said he, thoughtfully.

"With what?" asked the Earl.

Colonna pointed to the cheque with the feather end of his pen.

"Why, cash it, of course, and send the money off without delay."

The Italian smiled and shook his head. He was a better man of business than his host, and he foresaw some of those very difficulties which were the cause of so much perplexity to Saxon himself.

"It is not always easy to cash large sums," said he. "I must speak to Mr. Trefalden before I do anything with his cheque. Is he in the house?"

To which the Earl replied that he would see; and left the room.

After he was gone, Vaughan and Colonna went back to the despatch, and discussed the position of affairs in Sicily. Thence they passed on to the question of supplies, and consulted about the best means of bestowing Saxon's donation. At last they agreed that the larger share should be sent out in money, and the rest expended on munitions of war.

"It's a heavy sum," said the dragoon. "If you want a messenger to take it over, I am at your service."

"Thanks. Can you go the day after to-morrow?"

"To-night, if you like. My time is all my own just now. By the way, who is Mr. Trefalden's banker?"

He put out his hand for the cheque as he said this, and Colonna could not do otherwise than pass it to

him. After examining it for some moments in silence, he gave it back, and said; —

"Are those his figures, Signor Colonna? I see they are not yours."

To which the Italian replied very composedly,

"No, they are Olimpia's."

Major Vaughan rose, and walked over to the window.

"I shall ask Bertaldi to give me something to do, when I am out there," he said, after a brief pause. "I have had no fighting since I came back from India, and I am tired to death of this do-nothing life."

"Bertaldi will be only too glad," replied Colonna. "One experienced officer is worth more to us now than a squadron of recruits."

The dragoon sighed impatiently, and pulled at the ends of his moustache. It was a habit he had when he was ill at ease.

"I'm sorry for Castletowers," he said, presently. "He'd give his right hand to go over with me, and have a shot at the Neapolitans."

"I know he would; but it cannot be — it must not be. I would not countenance his going for the world," replied the Italian, quickly. "It would break his mother's heart."

"It never entered into the sphere of my calculations that Lady Castletowers had a heart," said Major Vaughan. "But you have enjoyed the advantage of her acquaintance longer than I have, so I defer to your better judgment."

At this moment the door opened, and the Earl came in alone.

"I can't find Trefalden, anywhere," said he. "I have looked for him all over the house, in the stables, and all through the gardens. He was last seen on the terrace, talking to Miss Colonna, and nobody knows what has become of him since."

"He's somewhere in the park, of course," said Colonna.

"I don't think so. I met my mother as I came in. She has been wandering about the park all the morning, and has not seen him."

"If I were you, Castletowers, I'd have the Slane dragged," said Major Vaughan, with a short, hard laugh. "He has repented of that cheque, and drowned himself in a paroxysm of despair."

"What nonsense!" said Colonna, almost angrily; but he thought it odd, for all that, and so did the Earl.

CHAPTER V.

The Mausoleum.

THERE was a very curious object in Castletowers-park, the shape of which was like a watchman's lanthorn, and the material grey granite. It stood on a little eminence in a retired corner of the domain, was approached by a double row of dwarf cypresses, about three feet and a half in height, and enshrined the last mortal remains of a favourite hunter belonging to the late Earl. It was called "the mausoleum."

A more hopelessly ugly edifice it would be difficult to conceive; but the late Earl had intended it to be a model of elegant simplicity, and had wasted some

hundreds upon it. Being abroad when his old horse died, he scrawled a rough outline of the Temple of Vesta on a sheet of foreign note-paper, and sent it up to his steward, with instructions to hand it over for execution to a Guildford stonemason. But the Earl was no draughtsman, and the stonemason, who had never heard of the Temple of Vesta in his life, was no genius; and thus it happened that the park at Castletowers came to be disfigured by an architectural phenomenon compared with which the toll-houses on Waterloo Bridge were chaste and classic structures. The Earl, however, died at Naples, in happy ignorance of the deed that had been done, and his successor had not thought it worth while to pull the building down.

When Saxon rose from his seat under the great oak, it was yet so early that he was tempted to prolong his walk. So he went rambling on among the ferns, watching the rabbits, and thinking of Miss Colonna, till he found himself, quite suddenly, at the foot of the little eminence on which the mausoleum was built.

It so happened that, although he had been more than ten days at Castletowers, he had never before strayed into this particular corner of the park. The phenomenon was consequently a novelty in his eyes, and he walked round it wonderingly, contemplating its ugliness from every side. He then went up and tried the door, which was painted to look like green bronze, and studded all over with great hexagonal bosses. It swung back, however, quite easily, and Saxon walked in.

The place was so dark, and the day outside was so brilliant, that for the first few moments he could see

nothing distinctly. At length a dumpy pillar on a massive square base came into view in the centre of the building, and Saxon saw by the inscription carved upon it (in very indifferent Latin) that the object of all this costly deformity was a horse. And then he sat down on the base of the column, and contemplated the mausoleum from within.

It was, if possible, uglier inside than outside; that is to say, the resemblance to a lanthorn was more perfect. The dumpy column looked exactly like a gigantic candle, and the very walls were panelled in granite in a way that suggested glass to the least imaginative observer. Had the stonemason possessed but a single grain of original genius, he would have added a fine bold handle in solid granite to the outside, and made the thing complete.

While Saxon was thinking thus, and lazily criticising the late Earl's Latin, he suddenly became aware of a lady coming slowly up between the cypresses.

He thought at first that the lady was Miss Colonna, and was on the point of stepping out to meet her; but in almost the same instant he saw that she was a stranger. She was looking down as she walked, with her face so bowed that he could not see her features distinctly; but her figure was more girlish than Miss Colonna's, and her step more timid and hesitating. She seemed almost as if she were counting the daisies in the grass as she came along.

Saxon scarcely knew what to do. He had risen from his seat, and now stood a little way back in the deep shadow of the mausoleum. While he was yet hesitating whether to come forward or remain where

he was, the young lady paused and looked round, as if expecting some one.

She had no sooner lifted up her face than Saxon remembered to have seen it before. He could not for his life tell when or where; but he was as confident of the fact as if every circumstance connected with it were fresh in his memory.

She was very fair of complexion, with soft brown hair, and large childlike brown eyes — eyes with just that sort of startled, pathetic expression about them which one sees in the eyes of a caged chamois. Saxon remembered even that look in them — remembered how that image of the caged chamois had presented itself to him when he saw them first — and then, all at once, there flashed upon him the picture of a railway station, an empty train, and a group of three persons standing beside the open door of a second-class carriage.

Yes; he recollected all about it now, even to the amount he had paid for her fare, and the fact that the lost ticket had been taken from Sedgebrook Station. Involuntarily, he drew back still further into the gloom of the mausoleum. He would not have shown himself, or have put himself in the way of being thanked, or paid, for the world.

Then she sighed, as if she were weary or disappointed, and came a few steps nearer; and as she continued to advance, Saxon continued to retreat, till she was nearly at the door of the mausoleum, and he had got quite round behind the pillar. It was like a scene upon a stage; only that in this instance the actors were improvising their parts, and there were no spectators to see them.

Just as he was speculating upon what he should do if she came in, and asking himself whether it would not be better, even now, to walk boldly out and risk the chances of recognition, the young lady decided the question for him by sitting down on the threshold of the building.

Saxon was out of his perplexity now. He was a prisoner, it was true; but his time was all his own, and he could afford to waste it in peeping from behind a pillar at the back of a young lady's bonnet. Besides, there was an air of adventure about the proceeding that was quite delightful, as far as it went.

So he kept very quiet, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of alarming her, and amused himself by conjecturing what imaginable business could bring Miss Rivière of Camberwell to this particular corner of Castletowers Park. Was it possible, for instance, that the Earl had been insane enough to have the phenomenon photographed, and was she about to colour the photograph on the spot? The idea was too monstrous to be entertained for a moment? And then the young lady sighed again — such a deep-drawn, tremulous, melancholy sigh, that Saxon's heart ached to hear it.

It was no sigh of mere fatigue. Unlearned as he was in man and womankind, he knew at once that such a sigh could only come from a heart heavily laden. And so he fell to wondering what her trouble could be, and whether he could help, in any anonymous way, to lighten it for her. What if he sent her a hundred-pound note in a blank envelope? She looked poor, and even if —

But at this point his meditations were broken in upon. A shadow darkened the doorway; Miss Rivière

rose from her seat upon the threshold; and Lady Castletowers stood suddenly before Saxon's astonished eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

What Saxon heard in the Mausoleum.

Lady Castletowers was the first to speak; and her voice, when she spoke, was measured and haughty.

"You have requested to see me again, Miss Rivière," she said.

"I have been compelled to do so," was the almost inaudible reply.

"And I have come here at your request."

Lady Castletowers paused, as if for some acknowledgment of her condescension in having done so; but no acknowledgment came.

"I must, however, beg you to understand quite distinctly that it is for the last time," she said, presently. "It is impossible that I should hold any further communication with you otherwise than by letter, and then only at stated periods, as heretofore."

The young lady murmured something of which Saxon could not distinguish a syllable.

"Then you will oblige me by saying it at once, and as briefly as possible," replied Lady Castletowers.

Saxon felt very uncomfortable. He knew that he ought not to be there. He knew this to be a strictly private conversation, and was quite aware that he ought not to overhear it, and yet what was he to do? He could still walk out, it was true, and explain his involuntary imprisonment; but he had an instinctive feel-

ing that Lady Castletowers would not have come to meet Miss Rivière in the park if she had not wished to keep the meeting secret, and that his presence there, however well he might apologise for it, would cause her ladyship a very disagreeable surprise. Or he might stop his ears, and so be, virtually, as far away as in his London chambers; but then he felt certain that this young girl whom he had assisted once before, was now in some great trouble, and he longed to know what that trouble was, that he might assist her again. So, as these thoughts flashed through his mind, Saxon concluded to stay where he was, and not to stop his ears — at least for the present.

Lady Castletowers had requested Miss Rivière to state her business at once, and also to state it briefly; but it seemed as if the task were strangely difficult, for the girl still hesitated.

At length she said, with a kind of sob: —

"Lady Castletowers, my mother is very ill."

And then Saxon could see that she was weeping.

"Do you mean that your mother is dying?" asked the Countess, coldly.

"No; but that she must die, if the necessary means are not taken to save her."

"What do you mean by the necessary means?"

"Doctor Fisher says that she must go to some place on the Italian coast — to Nice, or Mentone," replied the girl, making a great effort to steady her voice, and keep her tears from falling. "He thinks she may live there for years, with care and proper treatment; but —"

"Why not here, with care and proper treatment?" said Lady Castletowers.

"He says this variable climate is killing her — that she is dying day by day, as long as she remains in it."

"It is her native climate," said Lady Castletowers.

"Yes — but she was so young when she left it; and she has lived so many, many years of her life abroad."

"Well?"

The girl lifted up her face, all pale and tearful as it was, and looked at her — just looked at her — but said never a word. It was not an indignant look — nor an imploring look — nor even a reproachful look; but it was, at all events, a look that Lady Castletowers seemed to understand, for she replied to it, and the reply, though spoken as haughtily as ever, had in it something of the nature of an apology.

"You are aware," she said, "that your mother's annuity is paid out of my own private means, and without my son's knowledge. And my private means are very small — so small, that I find it difficult to meet even this obligation, inconsiderable as it is."

"But you will not let her die, Lady Castletowers! You cannot — you will not let her die!"

And the young girl wrung her hands together, in the passionate earnestness of her appeal.

Lady Castletowers looked down, and seemed as if she were tracing patterns on the turf with the end of her parasol.

"What sum do you require?" she said, slowly.

"Doctor Fisher said about thirty pounds —"

"Impossible! I will try to give you twenty pounds for this purpose: in fact, I will promise you twenty pounds; but I cannot do more."

Miss Rivière was about to speak; but the Countess slightly raised her hand, and checked the words upon her lips.

"The annuity," she said, shall be paid, as usual, into the hands of whatever foreign banker you may indicate; but I beg you both to understand that I must be troubled with no more applications of this kind."

The girl's cheek glowed with sudden indignation.

"You will be troubled with none, madam," she said. "Had there been any other person in the world to whom I could have applied for aid, I should not have claimed your assistance now."

Her eye dilated, and her lip trembled, and she said it firmly and proudly — as proudly as Lady Castletowers herself might have done. But the Countess passed her as if she had not spoken, and swept down the little avenue of cypresses, without taking any further notice of her presence.

Miss Rivière continued to stand in the same proud attitude till the last gleam of her ladyship's silken skirts had disappeared among the trees. And then her strength suddenly gave way, and she sat down again upon the gloomy threshold, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

CHAPTER VII.

The Art of Selling Out.

It was no wonder that Saxon could not be found when he was wanted, or that it was late before he returned to the house. His imprisonment lasted altogether more than an hour; and when Miss Rivière at length rose and went away, he took a long walk round in another direction, in order that he might be able to account for his absence.

He had no sooner made his appearance, however, in the drawing-room, than the Earl carried him off to Signor Colonna's study, and there left him. The Italian met him with outstretched hands; and Olimpia, who was writing busily, looked up and smiled as he came in.

"What am I to say to you, Mr. Trefalden?" exclaimed Colonna. "How shall I thank you?"

"Pray don't mention it," said Saxon, shyly.

"How can I help mentioning it? An act of such munificence —"

"I should be so much obliged to you," interrupted Saxon, "if you would say nothing about it."

"You may compel me to silence, Mr. Trefalden; but every true heart in Italy will thank you."

"I hope not, because I don't deserve it. I did it to — to please Miss Colonna."

"Then I hope that you at least permitted her to thank you as you deserve to be thanked, Mr. Trefalden," said the Italian, as he glanced smilingly from

the one to the other. "And now will you pardon me if I ask you a question?"

"I shall be happy to answer a thousand."

"You have given us your cheque for a very large sum," said Colonna, taking the paper from his desk, and glancing at it as he spoke. "For so large a sum, that I have almost doubted whether your banker will cash it on presentation. It is unusual, at all events, for even millionnaires like yourself, Mr. Trefalden, to keep so many loose thousands at their banker's. May I ask if you have given this a thought?"

Saxon stared hard at the cheque across the table, and wondered whether Olimpia had really doubled it or not; but the slope of the desk prevented him from seeing the figures distinctly.

"I have thought of it," he replied, with a troubled look, "and — and I am really afraid —"

"That your balance will be found insufficient to cover it," added Colonna, entering a brief memorandum on the margin of the cheque. "It is fortunate that I asked the question."

"I am very sorry," stammered Saxon.

"Why so? It is a matter of no importance."

"I was afraid —"

"I do not know, of course, how your money is placed," said Signor Colonna, "but I should suppose you will have no difficulty in transferring to Drummond's whatever amount may be necessary."

"It's in Government stock — that is, a great part of it," replied Saxon, mindful of the New Overland Route Railway and Steam Packet Company, Limited.

"Oh, then you will only have to sell out. Nothing easier."

Nothing easier, indeed! Poor Saxon!

"You may have to go up to town, however," added Colonna. "By the way, who is your stockbroker?"

But Saxon did not even know what a stockbroker was.

"My cousin manages my money for me," said he; "I must go to him about it."

"Mr. Trefalden of Chancery Lane?"

"Yes."

Signor Colonna and his daughter exchanged glances.

"I do not see that you need trouble your cousin this time," said the Italian, after a moment's hesitation.

"Why not?"

"Because a lawyer has nothing to do with the transfer of stock. He can only employ a stockbroker for you; and why should you not employ a stockbroker for yourself? It is more simple."

"I don't think my cousin William would like it," said Saxon, hesitatingly.

"Pray pardon me, but is it well that you should defer so much to his opinion? Might it not lead him to think himself privileged to establish some sort of censorship over your actions?"

Saxon was silent. He knew that his cousin had already established that censorship, and that he had submitted to it. But he did not feel inclined to acknowledge it.

"The present," said Signor Colonna, "is a case in point. Your cousin is no hearty friend to our cause. He never gave sixpence to Italy in his life, and he will surely regard this noble gift of yours from an

adverse point of view. Why then place the matter before him? If he disapproved you would not withdraw your donation — —"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Saxon, hastily.

"And you would offend him if you persisted. Be advised by me, my dear Mr. Trefalden, and act for yourself."

"But I don't know how to act for myself," said Saxon.

"I will put you in the way of all that. I will introduce you to my friend, Signor Nazzari, of Austin Friars. He is an Italian Jew — a stockbroker by profession — and worthy of whatever confidence you may be disposed to place in him."

Saxon thanked him, but his mind was ill at ease, and his face betrayed it. He was sorely tempted by Signor Colonna's proposition. He shrunk from telling his cousin what he had done, and he knew that William Trefalden would be ten times more annoyed than he was by the Greatorex transaction; but, on the other hand, he abhorred deceit and double-dealing.

"But won't it seem like a want of confidence in William?" he said, presently. "I won't do what's underhand, you know. I'd endure anything sooner."

Signor Colonna, who had been writing his countryman's address on a slip of paper, looked up at this and laid his pen aside.

"My dear sir," he said, "I but advise you to do as other gentlemen do in your position. No lawyer does stockbroker's work."

"That may be, and yet — —"

"You might as reasonably send for your lawyer if you were ill. He could but call in a physician to cure

you, as he would now call in a stockbroker to sell your stock."

"I wish I knew what I ought to do!" ejaculated Saxon.

The Italian glanced impatiently towards his daughter; but Olimpia went on writing, and would not look up. She knew quite well that her father wanted her to throw in the weight of her influence, but she had resolved to say nothing. The great work was hers to do, and she had done it; but she would not stoop to the less. So Colonna went back, unaided; to the charge, and argued till Saxon was, if not convinced, at least persuaded.

And then it was arranged that Saxon and Vaughan should go up to town together on the following day — the millionnaire to sell out his money, and the dragoon to dispose of it as Signor Colonna might direct.

CHAPTER VIII.

What Happened the Evening Before.

THE morning was cold and grey, quite unlike the glowing golden mornings by which it had been preceded for the last fortnight, as Saxon Trefalden and Major Vaughan sped up to London by the fast train that left Sedgebrook station at 9.45.

They were alone in the compartment, sitting silently face to face, each busy with his own thoughts. The landscape was dull outside. A low mist shrouded the pleasant Surrey hills, the steam hung in the damp air for a quarter of a mile behind the flying train, and the plumy elms that came in places almost to the verge of

the line, looked ghost-like and shadowy. It was such a day as French authors love to describe when they write of England and the English — a day when the air is heavy and the sky is grey, and Sir Smith (young, rich, handsome, but devoured with the spleen) goes out and cuts his throat on Primrose Hill.

Dreary as the day was, however, these two travellers were no less dreary. Saxon's thoughts were troubled enough, and Vaughan's were all gloom and bitterness. As he sat there, knitting his brows, gnawing the ends of his long moustache, and staring down at the mat between his feet, he was going over something that happened the evening before in Lady Castletowers' drawing-room — going over it, word for word, look for look, just as it happened — going over it for the hundredth time, and biting it into memory deeper and sharper with every repetition.

This was what it was, and how it happened.

Dinner was over, coffee had been handed round, and Major Vaughan had made his way to a quiet corner under a lamp, where Olimpia sat reading. He remembered quite well how the light fell on her face from above, and how she looked up with a pleasant smile as he sat down beside her.

They fell into conversation. He asked first if he might be forgiven for disturbing her, and then if she had any commands for Italy. To which she replied that her only commands concerned himself; that he should fight bravely, as, indeed, she had no need to tell so daring a soldier, and come back safe when the cause was won. Whereupon, the thing that he had resolved never to say rose all at once to his lips, and

he asked if there would be any hope for him when this had come to pass.

"Hope?" she repeated. "Hope for what, Major Vaughan?"

And then, in a few strong, earnest words, he told her how he loved her, and how, to win her, he would endure and dare all things; but she, looking at him with a sort of sad surprise, replied that it could never be.

He had never dreamed that it could be. He had told himself a thousand times that he was mad to love her; that he should be ten times more mad to declare his love; and yet, now that the words were spoken, he could not bring himself to believe that they had been spoken in vain.

So, with an eager trembling of the voice that he could not control, though he strove hard to do so, he asked if time would make no difference; and she answered, very gently and sadly, but very firmly — "None."

None! He remembered the very tone in which she said it — the dropping of her voice at the close of the word — the sigh that followed it. He remembered, also, how he sat looking at her hands as they rested, lightly clasped together, on the volume in her lap — how white and slender they showed against the purple binding — and how, when all was said, he longed to take them in his own, and kiss them once at parting. Well; it was said, and done, and over now — all over!

And then he looked out into the grey mists, and thought of Italy and the stirring life before him. He had never cared much for the "cause," and he now

cared for it less than ever. Olimpia's eyes had been the "cause" to him; and, like many another, he had attached himself to it for her sake alone. But that mattered little now. He needed excitement; and any cause for which there was work to be done and danger to be encountered, would have been welcome to him.

In the meanwhile, Saxon, sitting in the opposite corner, had his own troubles to think about. He was not at all satisfied with himself, in the first place, for the part he was playing towards his cousin. He could not divest himself of the idea that he was doing something "underhand;" and that idea was intolerable to him. In the second place, he was not quite comfortable with regard to Miss Colonna. He had not begun exactly to question himself about the nature of his admiration for her, or even to speculate upon the probable results of that admiration; but he had become suddenly aware of the extent of her power, and was startled at finding to what lengths he might be carried by his desire to please her. William Trefalden had said that she was capable of asking him to take the command of a troop; but a vague consciousness of how Olimpia was capable of asking him to do a great deal more than that, had dawned by this time upon Saxon's apprehension.

And then, besides all this, he could not help thinking of his adventure in the mausoleum, and of the strange interview that he had involuntarily witnessed between Lady Castletowers and Miss Rivière. The girl's sorrowful young face haunted him. He wanted to help her; and he wanted advice as to the best way of helping her. Above all, he wanted to penetrate the mystery of her claim on Lady Castletowers. He would

have given anything to have been able to talk these things over with the Earl; but that, after what he had heard, was, of course, impossible. So he pondered and puzzled, and at last made up his mind that he would consult his cousin on the subject while he was up in town.

Thus, absorbed each in his own thoughts, the two men sped on, face to face, without exchanging a syllable. They might probably have continued their journey in silence to the end, if, somewhere about half-way between Sedgebrook station and Waterloo-bridge, Saxon had not chanced to look up and find his companion's eyes fixed gloomily upon him.

"Well," said he, with a surprised laugh, "why do you look at me in that portentous way? What have I done?"

"Nothing particularly useful that I am aware of, my dear fellow," replied the dragoon. "The question is not what you *have* done, but what you *may* do. I was wondering whether you mean to follow my example?"

"In what respect?"

"In respect of Italy, of course. Are you intending to join Garibaldi's army?"

"No — that is, I have not thought about it," replied Saxon. "Is Castletowers going?"

"I should think not. His mother would never consent to it."

"If he went, I would go," said Saxon, after a moment's pause. "There's camp-life to see, I suppose; and fighting to be done?"

"Fighting, yes; but as to the camp life, I can tell

you nothing about that. I fancy the work out there will be rough enough for some time to come."

"I shouldn't mind how rough it was," said Saxon, his imagination warming rapidly to this new idea.

"How would you like to march a whole day without food, sleep on the bare ground in a soaking rain, with only a knapsack under your head, and get up at dawn to fight a battle before breakfast?" asked Vaughan.

"I should like it no better than others, I dare say," laughed the young man; "but I shouldn't mind trying it. I wish Castletowers could go. We've been planning to make a tour together by-and-by; but a Sicilian campaign would be a hundred times better."

"If he were as free as yourself, Castletowers would be off with me to-morrow morning," said Vaughan; and then his brow darkened again as he remembered how, not only Saxon, whom he suspected of admiring Olimpia Colonna, but the Earl, of whose admiration he had no doubt whatever, would both remain behind, free to woo or win her, if they could, when he was far away.

It was not a pleasant reflection, and at that moment the rejected lover felt that he hated them both, cordially.

"Which route do you take?" asked Saxon, all unconscious of what was passing in his companion's mind.

"The most direct, of course — Dover, Calais, and Marseilles. I shall be in Genoa by eight or nine o'clock on Sunday evening."

"And I at Castletowers."

"How is that?" said Vaughan, sharply, "I thought you said your time was up yesterday?"

"So it was; but Castletowers has insisted that I

shall prolong my visit by another week, and so I go back this evening. How we shall miss you at dinner!"

But to this civility the Major responded only by a growl.

CHAPTER IX.

William Trefalden explains the Theory of Legal Fictions.

SIGNOR NAZZARI was a tall, spare, spider-like Italian, who exercised the calling of a stock and share broker, and rented a tiny office under a dark arch in the midst of that curious web of passages known as Austin Friars. He had been prepared for Saxon's visit by a note from Colonna, and met him in a tremor of voluble servility, punctuating his conversation with bows, and all but prostrating himself in the dust of his office. Flies were not plentiful in Signor Nazzari's web, and such a golden fly as Saxon was not meshed every day.

It was surprising what a short time the transaction took. Colonna might well say nothing was easier. First of all they went to the Bank of England, where Saxon signed his name in a great book, after which they returned to Austin Friars and waited while Signor Nazzari went somewhere to fetch the money; and then he came back with a pocket-book full of bank notes secured round his neck by a steel chain — and the thing was done.

Thereupon Major Vaughan solemnly tore up Saxon's cheque in the stockbroker's presence, and received the value thereof in crisp new Bank of England paper.

"And now, Trefalden," said he, "fare you well till we meet in Italy."

"I've not made up my mind yet, remember," replied Saxon, smiling.

"Make it up at once, and go with me in the morning."

"No, no; that is out of the question."

"Well, at all events don't put it off till the fun is all over. If you come, come while there's something to be done."

"Trust me for that," replied Saxon, with a somewhat heightened colour. "I won't share the feasting if I haven't shared the fighting. Good-by."

"Good-by."

And with this, having traversed together the mazes of Austin Friars and emerged upon the great space in front of the Exchange, they shook hands and parted.

Saxon turned his face westward, and went down Cheapside on foot. He was going to Chancery Lane, but he was in no hurry to reach his destination. He walked slowly, paused every now and then to look in a shop window, and took a turn round St. Paul's. He pretended to himself that he went in to glance at Nelson's monument; but he had seen Nelson's monument twice before, and he knew in his heart that he cared very little about it. At length inexorable fate brought him to his cousin's door, so he went up the dingy stairs, feeling very guilty, and hoping not to find the lawyer at home. On the first landing he met Mr. Keckwitch with his hat on. It was just one o'clock, and that respectable man was going to his dinner.

"Mr. Trefalden is engaged, sir, with a client," said the head-clerk, to Saxon's immense relief.

"Oh, then you can say that I called, if you please," replied he, turning about with great alacrity.

"But I think the gentleman will be going directly, sir, if you wouldn't mind taking a seat in the office," added Mr. Keckwitch.

"I — perhaps I had better try to come by-and-by," said Saxon, reluctantly.

"As you please, sir, but I'm confident you wouldn't have to wait five minutes."

So Saxon resigned himself to circumstances, and waited.

The clerks were all gone to dinner, and for a few minutes he had the place to himself. Presently the door of William Trefalden's private room was partly opened —

"Then you will write to me, if you please," said a deep voice; but the owner of the voice, who seemed to be holding the door on the other side, remained out of sight.

"You may expect to hear from me, Mr. Behrens, the day after to-morrow," replied the lawyer.

"And Lord Castletowers quite understands that the mortgage money *must* be forthcoming by the appointed day?"

"I have informed him so."

"*Must*, Mr. Trefalden. Remember that. I can allow no grace. Twenty thousand of the money will have to go direct to the Worcestershire agent, as you know; and the odd five will be wanted for repairs, building, and so forth. It's imperative — quite imperative."

"I am fully aware of your necessity for the money, Mr. Behrens," was the reply, uttered in William Trefalden's quietest tone; "and I have duly impressed that

fact upon his lordship. I have no doubt that you will be promptly paid."

"Well, I hope so, for his sake. Good morning, Mr. Trefalden."

"Good morning."

And with this Mr. Behrens came out into the office, followed by the lawyer, who almost started at sight of his cousin.

"You here, Saxon?" he said, having seen his client to the top of the stairs. "I thought you were at Castletowers."

It would have taken a keener observer than Saxon to discover that the wish was father to Mr. Trefalden's thought; but there was no doubt of the relationship.

"Well, so I am, in one sense," replied the young man. "I'm only in town for the day."

"And what brings you to town only for the day? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Oh, no — nothing at all. I — that is you —"

And Saxon, unpractised in the art of equivocation, floundered helplessly about in search of a reason that should be true, and yet not the truth.

"You want to consult me about something, I suppose," said the lawyer, observant of his perplexity. "Come into my room, and tell me all about it."

So they went into the private room, and William Trefalden closed the double doors.

"First of all, Saxon," said he, laying his hand impressively on the young man's shoulder, "I must ask you a question. You saw that client of mine just now, and you heard him allude to certain matters of business as he went out?"

"I did," replied Saxon; "and I was sorry . . ."

"One moment, if you please. You heard him mention the name of Lord Castletowers?"

"Yes."

"Then I must request you on no account to mention that circumstance to the Earl. It is a matter in which he is not concerned, and of which there is no need to inform him."

"But it seemed to me that he owed twenty-five thousand . . ."

William Trefalden smiled and shook his head.

"No, no," said he. "Nothing of the kind. It is a simple transfer of capital — a private transaction, in which the Earl's name has been incidentally used; but only his name. He has nothing to do with it, personally — nothing whatever."

"But —"

"But you heard only the end of a conversation, my dear fellow, and you misunderstood the little you did hear. You understand that this is not to be repeated?"

"Yes — I understand," replied Saxon, doubtfully.

"And I have your promise to observe my request?"

Saxon hesitated.

"I don't doubt *you*, cousin William," he said, bluntly; "though, of course, you know that without my telling you. But I don't know how to doubt my own ears, either. I heard that big, cross-looking old fellow distinctly say that Castletowers must pay him twenty-five thousand pounds by the tenth of next month. What can that mean, if not . . ."

"Listen to me for three minutes, Saxon," interrupted Mr. Trefalden, good-humouredly. "You have heard of such things as legal fictions?"

"Yes; but I don't understand what they are."

"Well, legal fictions are legally defined as 'things that have no real essence in their own body, but are acknowledged and accepted in law for some especial purpose.'"

"I don't understand that either."

"I should be surprised if you did," replied his cousin, with a pleasant smile; "but I will try to explain it to you. In law, as in other things, my dear fellow, we are occasionally glad to adopt some sort of harmless hypothesis in order to arrive at conclusions which would otherwise cost more time and trouble than they are worth. Thus, when a legal contract is made at sea, the deed is dated from London, or Birmingham, or any inland place, in order to draw what is called the cognisance of the suit from the Court of Admiralty to the Courts of Westminster. Again, a plaintiff who brings an action in the Court of Exchequer fictitiously alleges himself to be the Queen's debtor. He is not the Queen's debtor. He owes the Queen no more than you owe her; but he must make use of that expedient to bring himself under the jurisdiction of that particular court."

"What intolerable nonsense!" exclaimed Saxon.

"One more instance. Till within the last eight years or so, the law of ejectment was founded on a tissue of legal fictions, in which an imaginary man called John Doe lodged a complaint against another imaginary man called Richard Roe, neither of whom ever existed in any mortal form whatever. What do you say to that?"

"I say, cousin, that if I were a lawyer, I should

be ashamed of a system made up of lies like that!" replied Saxon.

Mr. Trefalden flung himself into his arm-chair and laughed.

"I won't have you abuse our legal fictions in that way," he said. "These little things are the romance of law, and keep our imaginations from drying up."

"They ought not to be necessary," said Saxon, who could not see the amusing side of John Doe and Richard Roe.

"I grant you that. They have their origin, no doubt, in some defect of the law. But then we are not blessed with a Code Napoleon; and perhaps we should not like it, if we were. Such as our laws are, we must take them, and be thankful. They might be a great deal worse, depend on it."

"Then is it a legal fiction that Castletowers owes Mr. Behrens twenty-five thousand pounds?" asked Saxon.

William Trefalden winced. He had hoped that the woolstapler's name would have escaped Saxon's observation; but it had done nothing of the kind. Saxon remembered every word clearly enough — names, dates, amount of money, and all.

"Precisely," replied the lawyer "Lord Castletowers no more owes Mr. Behrens twenty-five thousand pounds than you do. He would be a ruined man at this moment, Saxon, if he did."

"He does not behave like a ruined man," said Saxon.

"Of course not. He would not be filling his house with guests and giving balls, if he were. So now all's explained, and I have your promise."

Saxon looked earnestly in his cousin's face. He fancied that no man could look another in the face and tell a lie. Many persons entertain that belief; but a more mistaken notion does not exist. Your practised liar makes a point of staring into his hearer's eyes, and trusts to that very point for half the effect of his lie. But Saxon would not have believed this had an angel told him so. Therefore he looked in his cousin's face for evidence — and therefore, when William Trefalden gave him back his look with fearless candour, his doubts were at once dispelled, and he promised unhesitatingly.

"That's well," said the lawyer. "And now, Saxon, sit down and tell me what you have come to say."

"It's a long story," replied Saxon.

"I am used to hearing long stories."

"But I am not used to telling them; and I hardly know where to begin. It's about a lady."

"About a lady," repeated William Trefalden; and Saxon could not but observe that his cousin's voice was by no means indicative of satisfaction.

"In fact," added the young man, hastily, "it's about two or three ladies."

Mr. Trefalden held up his hands.

"Two or three ladies!" said he. "How shocking! Is Miss Colonna one of them?"

"Oh, dear no!" replied Saxon, emphatically — perhaps a little too emphatically. And then he plunged into his story, beginning at his first meeting with Miss Rivière at the Waterloo-bridge station, and ending with the adventure in the mausoleum.

Mr. Trefalden heard him to the end very patiently, putting in a question now and then, and piecing the

facts together in his mind as they were brought before him. At length Saxon came to a pause, and said: —

"That's all, cousin; and now I want you to tell me what I can do."

"What do you want to do?" asked the lawyer.

"I want to help them, of course."

"Well, you have the young lady's address. Send her a cheque for fifty pounds."

"She wouldn't take it, if I did. No, no, cousin William, that's not the way. It must be done much more cleverly. I want them to have money regularly — twice a year, you know — enough to keep her poor mother in Italy, and pay the doctor's bills, and all that."

"But this annuity from Lady Castletowers . . ."

"Lady Castletowers is as hard and cold as marble," interrupted Saxon, indignantly. "*I* had rather starve than take a penny from her. If you had heard how grudgingly she promised that miserable twenty pounds!"

"I never supposed that her ladyship had a hand open as day, for melting charity," said Mr. Trefalden.

"Charity!" echoed Saxon.

"Besides, I doubt that it *is* charity. There must be some claim . . . Surely I have heard the name of Rivière in connection with the Wynneclyffes or the Pierrepoints — and yet — Pshaw! if Keckwitch were here he could tell me in a moment!"

And Mr. Trefalden leaned back thoughtfully in his chair.

"I wish you could suggest a way by which I might do something for them," said Saxon. "I want

them to get it, you see, without knowing where it comes from."

"That makes it difficult," said Mr. Trefalden.

"And yet it must not seem like almsgiving."

"More difficult still."

"I thought, if it were possible to give her some sort of commission," said Saxon, doubtfully, "a commission for coloured photographs of the Italian coast, you know — would that do?"

"It is not a bad idea," replied the lawyer. "It might do, if skilfully carried out; but I think I hear Keckwitch in the office."

And then Mr. Trefalden went in search of his head clerk, leaving Saxon to amuse himself as well as he could with the dingy map and the still more dingy law books.

At the end of a long half-hour, he came back with a paper of memoranda in his hand.

"Well?" said Saxon, who was tired to death of his solitary imprisonment.

"Well; I believe I know all that is to be learned up to a certain point; and I have, at all events, found out who your railway heroine is. It's a somewhat romantic story, but you must sit down and listen patiently while I relate it."

CHAPTER X.

A Page of Family History.

EVERY student of English history is familiar with the noble and ancient name of Holme-Pierrepoint. A more stately race of men and women than the bearers of that name never traversed the pages of mediæval chronicle. Their famous ancestor, Thierry de Pierrepoint, "came over," as the phrase is, with William the Bastard: but he was only the younger son of a younger son, and the houses which look back to him as their founder are, after all, but offshoots from that still more ancient line that held lands and titles in Franche Comté, three centuries before the great conquest.

How Thierry de Pierrepoint came to be lord of many a fair and fertile English manor; how his descendants multiplied and prospered, held high offices of state under more than thirty sovereigns, raised up for themselves great names in camp and council, and intermarried with the bravest and fairest of almost every noble family in the land, needs no recapitulation here. Enough that the Holme-Pierrepoints were an elder branch of the original Pierrepoint stock; and that Lady Castletowers, whose father was a Holme-Pierrepoint, and whose mother was a Talbot, had really some excuse for that inordinate pride of birth which underlaid every thought and act of her life, as the ground-colour underlies all the tints of a painting.

The circumstances of her ladyship's parentage were these: —

George Condé Holme-Pierrepoint, third Lord Holmes, of Holme Castle, Lancashire, being no longer

young, and having, moreover, encumbered a slender estate with many mortgages, married at fifty years of age, to the infinite annoyance of his cousin and heir-presumptive, Captain Holme-Pierrepoint, of Sowerby. The lady of Lord Holmes's choice was just half his age. She was known in Portsmouth and its neighbourhood as "the beautiful Miss Talbot;" she was the fifth of nine daughters in a family of fourteen children; and her father, the Honourable Charles Talbot, held the rank of Rear-Admiral in the Royal Navy. It is, perhaps, almost unnecessary to add that Miss Talbot had no fortune.

This marriage was celebrated some time in the summer of 1810; and in the month of October, 1811, after little more than one year of marriage, Lady Holmes died, leaving an infant daughter named Alethea Claude. Wellnigh broken-heated, the widower shut himself up in Holme Castle, and led a life of profound seclusion. He received no visitors; he absented himself from his Parliamentary duties, and he was rarely seen beyond his own park gates. Then fantastic stories began to be told of his temper and habits. It was said that he gave way to sudden and unprovoked paroxysms of rage; that he had equally strange fits of silence; that he abhorred the light of day, and sat habitually with closed shutters and lighted candles; that he occasionally did not go to bed for eight-and-forty hours at a time; and a hundred other tales, equally bizarre and improbable. At length, when the world had almost forgotten him, and his little girl was between four and five years of age, Lord Holmes astounded his neighbours, and more than astounded his heir, by marrying his daughter's governess.

How he came to take this step, whether he married the governess for her own sake, or for the child's sake, or to gratify a passing caprice, were facts known only to himself. That he did marry her, and that, having married her, he continued to live precisely the same eccentric, sullen life as before, was all that even his own servants could tell about the matter. The second Lady Holmes visited nowhere, and was visited by none. What she had been as Miss Holme-Pierrepoint's governess, she continued to be as Miss Holme-Pierrepoint's stepmother. She claimed no authority. She called her husband "my lord," stood in awe of her servants, and yielded to the child's imperious temper just as she had done at the first. The result was that she remained a cypher in her own house, and was treated as a cypher. When, by-and-by, she also gave birth to a little daughter, there were no rejoicings; and when, some few years later, she died and was laid beside her high-born predecessor, there were no lamentations. Had she brought an heir to the house, or had she filled her place in it more bravely, things, perchance, had gone differently. But the world is terribly apt to take people at their own valuation; and Lady Holmes, perplexed

> "—— with the burden of an honour
> Unto which she was not born,"

had rated herself according to the dictates of one of the lowliest and most timid hearts that ever beat in a woman's breast.

Thus it was that Lord Holmes became the father of two daughters, and was twice a widower. And thus it was that Captain Holme-Pierrepoint of Sowerby re-

mained heir-presumptive to his cousin's coronet after all.

No two girls ever grew up more unlike each other than the Honourable Miss Holme-Pierrepoints. There was a difference of nearly six years in their age to begin with; but this was as nothing when compared with the difference in their appearance, dispositions, and tastes.

The elder was tall, stately, and remarkable from very early girlhood for that singular resemblance to Marie Antoinette, which became so striking in her at a later period of life. The younger, on the contrary, was pretty rather than beautiful, painfully sensitive and shy, and as unpretending as might have been the lowliest peasant girl upon her father's lands. Alethea never forgot that she was noble on both sides; but Elizabeth seemed never to remember that she was noble on either. Alethea was cold and ambitious; but Elizabeth's nature was as clinging and tender as it was unselfish. Elizabeth looked up to Alethea as to the noblest and most perfect of God's creatures; but Alethea, who had never forgiven her father's second marriage, held her half-sister in that kind of modified estimation in which a jeweller might hold a clouded diamond, or a sportsman a half-bred retriever.

Years went by; and as the girls grew to womanhood their unlikeness became more and more apparent. In due time, the Honourable Miss Holme-Pierrepoint, being of an age to take her place in society, was presented at Court by her aunt, the Countess of Glastonbury, and "brought out" after the sober fashion that prevailed in the days of George the Third. Before the close of that season she was engaged to Harold

Wynneclyffe, fourth Earl of Castletowers, and early in the spring-time of the following year, while her young sister was yet in the school-room, the beautiful Alethea was married from her aunt's house in Somersetshire, where the ceremony was privately performed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

In the meanwhile it was arranged that Lord Holmes' younger daughter was to be spared all those difficulties and dangers that beset a matrimonial choice. Her lot was cast for her. She was to marry Captain Holme-Pierrepoint of Sowerby.

A more simple and admirable scheme could not have been devised. Captain Holme-Pierrepoint was her father's heir, and it was of course desirable that Elizabeth's dowry should remain in the family. Then Elizabeth was very young — young even for her age — and her character needed to be judiciously formed. Captain Holme-Pierrepoint was the very man to form a young lady's character. He was a man who got through a great deal of solid reading in the year; who delighted in statistics; who talked pompously, was a strict disciplinarian, and had "views" on the subject of education. In addition to these qualifications it may be added that Captain Holme-Pierrepoint was still handsome, and only forty-eight years of age.

Incredible as it may seem, however, Lord Holmes' second daughter was by no means so happy as she ought to have been in the contemplation of her destiny. Like most very young girls she had already dreamt dreams, and she could not bring herself to accept Captain Holme-Pierrepoint as the realisation of that ideal lover whom her imagination had delighted to picture. Her loving nature sorely needed something

to cling to, something to live for, something to worship; but she knew that she could not possibly live for, or cling to, or worship Captain Holme-Pierrepoint. Above all she shrunk from the prospect of having her character formed according to his educational "views."

In order, therefore, to avoid this terrible contingency, the younger Miss Holme-Pierrepoint deliberately rejected her destiny, and ran away with her drawing-master.

It was a frightful blow to the pride of the whole Pierrepoint family. The Talbots and the Wynneclyffes were of opinion that Lord Holmes was simply reaping what he had sown, and that nothing better was to be expected from the daughter of a nursery governess; but Lord Holmes himself regarded the matter in a very different light. Harsh and eccentric as he was, this old man had really loved his younger child, but now his whole heart hardened towards her, and he swore that he would never see her, or speak to her, or forgive her while he lived. Then, having formally disinherited her, he desired that her name should be mentioned in his presence no more.

As for Lady Castletowers, her resentment was no less bitter. She, too, never saw or spoke to her half-sister again. She did not suffer, it is true, as her father suffered. Her heart was not wrung like his — probably because she had less heart to be wrung; but her pride was even more deeply outraged. Neither of them made any effort to recall the fugitive. They merely blotted her name from their family records; burned, unread, the letters in which she implored their

forgiveness, and behaved in all respects, not as though she were dead, but as though she had never existed.

In the meanwhile, Elizabeth Holme-Pierrepoint had fled to Italy with her husband. He was a very young man — a mere student — rich in hope, poor in pocket, and an enthusiast in all that concerned his art. But enthusiasm is as frequently the index of taste as the touchstone of talent; and Edgar Rivière, with all his exquisite feeling for form and colour, his worship of the antique, and his idolatry of Raffaelle, lacked the one great gift that makes poet and painter — he had no creative power. He was a correct draughtsman and a brilliant colourist; but wanting "the vision and the faculty divine," wanted just all that divides elegant mediocrity from genius. He believed in himself, however, and his wife believed in him; and for years he struggled on, painting ambitious pictures that never sold, and earning a scanty subsistence by copying the Raffaelles he so dearly loved. At last, however, the bitter truth forced itself upon him, and he knew that he had deceived himself with hopes destined never to be realised. But the discovery came too late. Long years of unrequited effort had impaired his health and bowed his spirit within him, and he had no spark left of that high courage which would once have armed him against all "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." He did not long survive the wreck of his ambition. He died in Florence, literally of a broken heart, some fifteen years after his romantic marriage with Elizabeth Holme-Pierrepoint, leaving her with one surviving child wholly unprovided for.

Such were the destinies of these half-sisters, and such the family history of which William Trefalden

gave Saxon a meagre outline, after his consultation with Abel Keckwitch.

CHAPTER XI.

What they said at the Club.

"And now, Saxon," said Mr. Trefalden, "I can tell you nothing beyond the fact that Edgar Rivière died in Florence some three or four years since; but I think we need have no difficulty in guessing the parentage and history of your distressed damsel. I imagine that her mother must have been left simply destitute; and in this case, Lady Castletowers would, of course, do something to keep her from starvation. I doubt, however, that her charity went beyond that point."

"But, good Heavens!" exclaimed Saxon, who was now pacing up and down the room in a fever of indignation, "this lady is her own sister, cousin William! her own sister!"

"Her half-sister; but even so, it is too bad."

"Too bad? Why, it's monstrous! If I were Castletowers . . . . ."

"I do not suppose that Lord Castletowers has ever heard of the existence of these people," interrupted the lawyer.

"Then he ought to hear of it!"

"Not from your lips, young man. You have stumbled on a family secret, and, right or wrong, you are bound in honour to keep it. If Lady Castletowers keeps a skeleton in her private closet, it is not your place to produce that skeleton at the feast to which she invites you."

"I am afraid that's true," replied Saxon; "but I wish I might tell Castletowers all the same."

"You must do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Trefalden, emphatically. "It is in your power to give great assistance to two unfortunate ladies, and with that privilege be content."

"I cannot be content to stand by and see injustice done," exclaimed Saxon. "They have been cruelly wronged."

"Even so, my dear fellow, you are not Don Quixote."

The young man bit his lip.

"Don Quixote's name," said he, "is too often taken in vain. Heaven forbid that we nineteenth-century people should come to apply it to the simple love of right! It seems to me that the world over here thinks a vast deal more of politeness than justice. It's not so in Switzerland. And now, cousin William, how am I to help them?"

"You must allow me time to consider," replied Mr. Trefalden. "It will require delicate management."

"I know it will."

"But I can think the matter over, and write to you about it to-morrow."

"The sooner the better," said Saxon.

"Of course — and with regard to money?"

"With regard to money, do the best you can for them. I don't care how much it is."

"Suppose I were to draw upon you for a hundred thousand pounds!" said the lawyer, with a smile.

"I'm not afraid of that; but I do fear that you may not use my purse freely enough."

"I will try, at all events," replied Mr. Trefalden;

whereupon Saxon thanked him cordially, and put out his hand to say good-by.

"You don't inquire how the company is going on," said the lawyer, detaining him.

"I am afraid I had forgotten all about the company," laughed Saxon. "But I suppose it's all right."

"Yes, we are making way," replied his cousin. "Capital pours in, and the shareholders have every confidence in the direction. Our deputation is still at Teheran; and we are this week despatching one of our directors to Sidon. Sidon, you may remember, will be our great Mediterranean depôt; and we mean to establish immense engineering works there, without delay."

"Indeed!" said Saxon. "Is it still so great a secret?"

"It is a greater secret than ever."

"Oh — good-by."

"You are always in haste when business is the topic," said Mr. Trefalden. "Where are you going now?"

"To the club; and then back to Castletowers."

"You are making a long stay. What about the Colonnas?"

But Saxon was already half-way down the stairs, and seemed not to hear the question.

He then went direct to the Erectheum, where he no sooner made his appearance than he found himself a centre of attraction. The younger men were eager for news of Italy, and, knowing whence he came, overwhelmed him with questions. What was Colonna doing? Was he likely to go out to Garibaldi? What were Garibaldi's intentions? Was Victor Emmanuel favourable

to the Sicilian cause? Would the war be carried into Naples and Rome? And, if so, did Colonna think that the Emperor of the French would take arms for the Pope? Was it true that Vaughan was about to join the army of liberation? Was it true that Lord Castletowers would command the English contingent? Was it true that Saxon had himself accepted a commission? And so on, till Saxon stopped his ears, and refused to hear another question.

"I am not in Signor Colonna's confidence," said he, "and I know nothing of his projects. But I do know that I have accepted no such commission, and I am sure I may say the same for Castletowers."

"And Vaughan?" said Sir Charles Burgoyne.

"Vaughan *is* going. He starts for Genoa to-night."

"I felt sure that was true," observed Greatorex, with a significant laugh. "Perhaps the fair Olimpia has promised to take pity on him."

Saxon turned upon him as if he had been stung.

"What do you mean?" he said, hotly. "What should Miss Colonna have to do with the matter?"

"Perhaps a great deal," replied the banker. "The gentleman gives his arm to the cause, and the lady rewards him with her hand. 'Tis a fair exchange."

"And Vaughan has worshipped for years at the Olimpian shrine," added Sir Charles.

"Besides," said another, "what else does he go for? We all know that he doesn't care a straw for Italy. It may be a forlorn hope, you know."

"More likely than not, I should say," replied Burgoyne. "Olimpia Colonna is a clever woman, and knows her own market value. She'll fly at higher game than a major of dragoons."

Saxon's face was burning all this time with anger and mortification. At last he could keep silence no longer.

"All this may be true," he said. "I don't believe it is true; but at all events it is not in my power to contradict it. However, of one thing I am certain — that a crowded club-room is not the place in which a lady's name should be passed from mouth to mouth in this fashion."

"Your proposition is quite unexceptionable in a general way, my dear fellow," replied Burgoyne; "but in the present instance it does not apply. When a lady's name has figured for years in despatches, petitions, committee-lists, and reports of all kinds, civil and military, it can surely bear the atmosphere of a crowded club-room."

"I don't think that has anything to do with it," said Saxon, sturdily. "Despatches and petitions are public matters, and open to general discussion."

"But the probable marriage of a charming woman is a private matter, and therefore open to particular discussion," laughed the Guardsman. "For my part, I can only say that I mean to hang myself on Miss Colonna's wedding-day."

Then the conversation turned to Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel again, and presently Saxon made his escape, and was on his way to the station.

He felt very moody and uncomfortable, as he leaned back in his Hansom and sped along the Strand. He had heard much that was infinitely disagreeable to him during the brief hour spent at his club; much that he could not refute, and that he had been obliged to endure with comparative patience. That Olimpia's

name should be thus familiar to every idle lip seemed like a profanation; but that it should be coupled up with that of Vaughan and Castletowers, and perhaps — who could tell? — with the names of a hundred other men whose political sympathies necessarily brought them into communication with her, was sacrilege *pur et simple.*

What man on earth was worthy of her, to begin with? Certainly not Major Vaughan, with his surface morality, his half-concealed cynicism, and his iron-grey beard. Not even Castletowers, brave and honourable gentleman as he was. No — the only fit and appropriate husband for Olimpia Colonna would be some modern Du Guesclin or Bayard; some man of the old heroic type, whose soul would burn with a fire kindred to her own, who should do great deeds in the cause she loved, and lay his splendid laurels at her feet. But then, lived there such a hero, young, handsome, daring, ardent, successful in love and mighty in battle, a man of men, *sans peur et sans reproche?*

Perhaps Saxon was secretly comforted by the conviction that only a preux chevalier would be worthy of Miss Colonna, and that the preux chevalier was certainly not forthcoming.

In the midst of these reflections, however, he found himself once more at the station, with the express on the point of starting, and not a second to lose. To fling down his shillings, dash along the platform, and spring into a first-class carriage just as the guard was running along the line and the driver beginning his preliminary whistle, was the work of a moment. As the door closed behind him and he dropped into the

nearest corner, a friendly voice called him by name, and he found himself face to face with Miss Hatherton.

CHAPTER XII.

On the Platform.

"Well met by — well, not exactly by moonlight, Mr. Trefalden," said she, with that hearty, almost gentlemanly, way of proffering her hand that always put Saxon so delightfully at his ease in her society. "Have you been shooting any more weathercocks, or winning any more races since I saw you last?"

"No," replied Saxon, laughingly; "I have been more usefully employed."

"I rejoice to hear it. May I ask in what manner?"

"Oh, Miss Hatherton, if you want particulars, I'm lost! I am only pleasantly conscious that I have been behaving well, and improving myself. I fear it's rather a vague statement to put forward, though."

"Terribly vague. At all events, you have not yet donned the red shirt?"

"The red shirt!" echoed Saxon, with an involuntary glance at the little blue horseshoes besprinkling the bosom of the garment in which his person happened to be arrayed. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you have not gone over to Garibaldi."

Garibaldi again! It seemed as if the air was full of the names of Garibaldi and Italy to-day!

"What, you too, Miss Hatherton?" he said. "I have heard more about the Italian affairs since I have been in town this morning than I ever hear at Castle-

towers. The men at the Erectheum would talk of nothing else."

"I dare say not," replied the heiress. "The lookers-on have always more to say than the workers. But has not Miss Colonna enlisted you?"

"Indeed, no."

"You amaze me. I could not have believed that she would show such incredible forbearance towards a man of your inches. But perhaps you are intending to join in any case."

"I have no intention, one way or the other," said Saxon; "but if any of our fellows were going, I should like to join them."

"There is nothing I should enjoy so much, if I were a man," said Miss Hatherton. "Do you know how the fund is going on? I heard they were sorely in want of money the other day, and I sent them something — not much, but as much as I could spare."

"Oh, I believe the fund is going on pretty well," replied Saxon, with some embarrassment.

"You are a subscriber, of course?"

"Yes — I have given something."

Miss Hatherton looked at him keenly.

"I should like to know what that something was," said she. "I heard a strange rumour to-day . . . but I suppose you would not tell me if I were to ask you?"

Saxon laughed, and shook his head.

"A rumour is generally nothing but a polite name for a falsehood," replied he. "You should never believe in one."

"Perhaps not," said Miss Hatherton, gravely. "I should be sorry to believe all . . ."

She checked herself, and added:

"If you do go to Italy, Mr. Trefalden, you must be sure to let me know. I only marvel that Miss Colonna's eloquence has not been brought to bear upon you long since."

"Well, I'm not an Italian."

Miss Hatherton smiled compassionately.

"My dear sir," said she, "if you were a Thug, and willing to make your *roomal* useful to the cause, the Colonnas would enlist you. Nation is nothing to them. All they want is a volunteer or a subscriber. Besides, plenty of your countrymen have gone over the Alps already."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Saxon.

"As sure as that you never read the papers."

"You are quite right there," laughed he. "I never do."

"An English volunteer company is already formed," continued Miss Hatherton, "at Genoa."

"Yes — I know that."

"There will also, I hear, be a German corps; and both Swiss and Hungarian corps are talked about."

Saxon nearly bounded off his seat.

"A Swiss corps!" he shouted. "A Swiss corps, and nobody ever breathed a word of this to me!"

"It's very odd," said Miss Hatherton.

"And Miss Colonna was talking to me so much about Italy yesterday morning!"

"Perhaps they do not care to make a soldier of you, Mr. Trefalden," said the heiress.

"But they want soldiers!"

"True; but . . ."

"But what?"

"Perhaps they stand more in need of the sinews of war just now, than of your individual muscles."

"The sinews of war!" stammered Saxon.

"You might get killed, you see."

"Of course I might get killed; but every volunteer risks that. Vaughan may get killed."

"He may; but then Major Vaughan has not ever so many millions of money."

Saxon looked blankly in Miss Hatherton's face.

"I — I really don't understand," said he.

"Do you wish me to explain my meaning?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then — excuse the illustration — it might not be politic to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

"Oh, Miss Hatherton!" exclaimed Saxon, "how can you be so unjust, and so uncharitable?"

Miss Hatherton smiled good temperedly.

"I am a plain speaker, Mr. Trefalden," said she, "and plain speakers must expect to be called uncharitable sometimes. You need not be angry with me because I speak the truth."

"But indeed you're mistaken. It's not the truth, nor anything like the truth."

"Nay," she replied, "I know the Colonnas better than you know them. Giulio Colonna is insatiable where Italy is concerned. I do not deny that he is personally disinterested. He would give the coat off his back to buy powder and shot for the cause; but he would strip the coat from his neighbour's back for the same purpose without scruple."

"But, indeed . . . ."

"But, indeed, Mr. Trefalden, you may believe me when I tell you that he would regard it as a sacred

duty to fling every farthing of your fortune into this coming war, if he could get the handling of it. You will do well to beware of him."

"Then I am sure that Miss Colonna is not . . . ."

"Miss Colonna is utterly dominated by her own enthusiasm and her father's influence. You must beware of her, too."

"You will tell me to beware of yourself next, Miss Hatherton!"

"No, my dear sir, I shall do nothing of the kind. I like you very much; but I neither want your money, nor . . . . . Do you know what people are saying about you and Miss Colonna? By-the-way, is not this your station?"

"About me and Miss Colonna!" said Saxon, breathlessly.

"Yes — but this is certainly Sedgebrook. You must be quick, for they don't stop one moment."

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Hatherton, tell me first!"

"No, no, — jump out, or you will be carried on. I'll tell you when you are safe outside."

Saxon jumped out, but clung to the window with both hands.

"Now!" said he. "Now!"

"Well," replied Miss Hatherton, speaking somewhat slowly, and looking him full in the face; "they say, Mr. Trefalden — they say you are going to squander your fortune on Italy; marry Olimpia Colonna; and break Lord Castletowers' heart."

But Saxon never heard the last five words at all. Before Miss Hatherton could bring her sentence to an end, the shrill whistle drowned her voice, and the train

began to move. The young man stood looking after it for some moments in blank bewilderment.

"Squander your fortune on Italy, and marry Olimpia Colonna!" he repeated to himself.

"Fly to Castletowers, sir?" said the solitary fly-driver of the place, recognising the Earl's visitor.

But Saxon preferred to walk; so he took the short cut through the fields, and strode on with Miss Hatherton's words still ringing in his ears.

"Marry Olimpia Colonna!" he said, for the twentieth time, as he sat down presently upon a stile, and proceeded unconsciously to cut off the heads of the nearest dandelions with his cane. "Marry Olimpia Colonna! Good God! there isn't a prince on this earth half good enough for her! As for me, I'm only just worthy to be one of her slaves. What a mad notion! What a mad, preposterous notion!"

Mad and preposterous as it was, however, he could think of nothing else; and every now and then, as he loitered on his way through the pleasant meadows, he repeated half aloud those wondrous words:

"Marry Olimpia Colonna!"

CHAPTER XIII.

High Art.

As Saxon's cab turned in at the gates of the South-Western Railway Station, Mr. William Trefalden, who chanced to be in the occupation of a very similar Hansom, was driving rapidly down the Waterloo Road. The two vehicles with their unsuspecting occupants had been almost side by side on Waterloo Bridge, and, by one of those curious coincidences which happen still oftener in real life than in fiction, the one cousin was going down into Surrey as the honoured guest of Lady Castletowers, while the other was rattling over to Camberwell in search of her ladyship's disinherited half-sister.

"Six, Brudenell Terrace."

Mr. Trefalden took the card from his pocket-book, and read the address over once or twice. It was the same card that Miss Rivière had given to Saxon, and which Saxon had entrusted to the lawyer's keeping a couple of hours before. Mr. Trefalden was a prompt man of business, and was showing himself to be, in the present instance, better than his word. He had promised to act for his young kinsman in this matter; but he had not promised to set about the task that same afternoon. Yet here he was, with his face already turned southwards, and Miss Rivière's address in his hand.

The fact was, that Mr. Trefalden took more interest in this piece of family history than he had chosen to express, and was bent on learning all that might be

learnt about the Rivières without an hour's unnecessary delay. No man better appreciated the value of a family secret. There might, it is true, be nothing very precious in this particular specimen; but then one could never tell what might or might not be useful hereafter. At all events, Mr. Trefalden was not slow to see his way to possible advantages; and though he had asked time for consideration of what it might be best to do, he had half-a-dozen schemes outlined in his mind before Saxon left the office. Mr. Trefalden's plans seldom needed much elaboration. They sprang from his fertile brain like Minerva from the head of Zeus, armed at all points, and ready for the field.

Leaning back thoughtfully, then, with folded arms, and a cigar in his mouth, Mr. Trefalden drove past the Obelisk and the Elephant and Castle, and plunged into the very heart of that dreary suburban district which might with much propriety be called by the general name of Transpontia. Then, dismissing his cab at a convenient point, he proceeded in search of Brudenell Terrace on foot.

Transpontia is a district beset with difficulties to the inexperienced explorer. There dust, dissent, and dullness reign supreme. The air is pervaded by a faint odour of universal brickfield. The early muffin-bell is audible at incredible hours of the day. Files of shabby-genteel tenements, and dismal slips of parched front-garden, follow and *do* resemble each other with a bewildering monotony that extends for long miles in every direction, and is only interrupted here and there by a gorgeous gin-palace, or a depressing patch of open ground, facetiously called a "green," or a "common." Of enormous extent, and dreary sameness, the topo-

graphy of Transpontia is necessarily of the most perplexing character.

Mr. Trefalden was, however, too good a Londoner to be greatly baffled by the intricacies of any metropolitan neighbourhood. He pursued his way with a Londoner's instinct, and, after traversing a few small squares and by-streets, found himself presently in face of Brudenell Terrace.

It was a very melancholy terrace, built according to the strictest lodging-house order of architecture, elevated some four feet above the level of the street, and approached by a dilapidated flight of stone steps at each extremity. It consisted of four-and-twenty dingy, eight-roomed houses, in one or other of which, take them at what season of the year one might, there was certain to be either a sale or a removal going forward. In conjunction with the inevitable van or piece of stair-carpeting, might also be found the equally inevitable street-organ — that "most miraculous organ," which can no more be silenced than the voice of murder itself; and which in Transpontia hath its chosen home. The oldest inhabitant of Brudenell Terrace confessed to never having known the hour of any day (except Sunday) when some interesting native of Parma or Lucca was not to be heard grinding his slow length along from number one to number twenty-four. On the present occasion, however, when Mr. Trefalden knocked at the door of the house for which he was bound, both van and Italian boy were at the farther end of the row.

A slatternly servant of hostile bearing opened six inches of the door, and asked Mr. Trefalden what he

wanted. That gentleman intimated that he wished to see Mrs. Rivière.

"Is it business?" said the girl, planting her foot sturdily against the inner side of the door.

Mr. Trefalden admitted that it was business.

"Then it's Miss Rivers you want," said she, sharply. "Why didn't you say so at first?"

Mr. Trefalden attempted to explain that he should prefer to see Mrs. Rivière, if she would receive him; but the belligerent damsel refused to entertain the proposition for a moment.

"It's nothing to me what you prefer," said she, with prompt indignation. "You can't see Mrs. Rivers. If Miss Rivers won't do, you may as well go away at once."

So the lawyer was fain to enter the citadel on such terms as he could get.

He was shown into a front parlour, very poorly furnished. The window was partially darkened by a black blind, and close beneath it stood a table strewn with small photographs and drawing materials. A bonnet and shawl lay on the sofa behind the door. Three or four slight sketches in water-colours were pinned against the walls. An old-fashioned watch in a bronze stand of delicate foreign workmanship, occupied the centre of the mantelshelf; and in the farther corner of the room, between the fireplace and window, were piled a number of old canvases with their faces to the wall. Mr. Trefalden divined the history of these little accessories at a glance. He knew, as well as if their owners had told him so, that the watch and the canvases were relics of poor Edgar Rivière, and that the little water-colour sketches were by the artist's daughter. These

latter were very slight — mere outlines, with a dash of colour here and there — but singularly free and decisive. One represented a fragment of Cyclopean wall, tapestried with creeping plants; another, a lonely mediæval tower, with ragged storm-clouds drifting overhead; another, a group of stone pines at sunset, standing up, bronzed and bristling, against a blood-red sky. All were instinct with that open-air look which defies imitation; and in the background of almost every subject were seen the purple Tuscan hills. William Trefalden was no indifferent judge of art, and he saw at once that these scrawls had genius in them.

While he was yet examining them, the door opened noiselessly behind him, and a rustling of soft garments near at hand warned him that he was no longer alone. He turned. A young girl, meanly dressed in some black material, with only a slip of white collar round her throat, stood about half way between the window and the door — a girl so fair, so slight, so transparent of complexion, so inexpressibly fragile-looking, that the lawyer, for the first moment, could only look at her as if she were some delicate marvel of art, neither to be touched nor spoken to.

"You asked to see me, sir?" she said, with a transient flush of colour; for Mr. Trefalden still looked at her in silence.

"I asked to see Mrs. Rivière," he replied.

The young lady pointed to a chair.

"My mother is an invalid," she said, "and can only be addressed through me. Will you take a seat?"

But Mr. Trefalden, instead of taking a seat, went over to the corner, where the dusty canvases were piled against the wall, and said: —

"Are these some of your father's pictures?"

Her whole face became radiant at the mention of that name.

"Yes," she replied, eagerly. "Do you know his works?"

Mr. Trefalden paused a moment before answering this question. Then looking at her with a grave, almost a tender courtesy, he said: —

"I knew his works, my dear young lady — and I knew him."

"You knew him? Oh, you knew a good man, sir, if you knew my dear, dear father!"

"A good man," said Mr. Trefalden, "and a fine painter."

Her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"If the world had but done him justice!" she murmured.

Mr. Trefalden thought he had never seen eyes so beautiful or so pathetic.

"The world never does justice to its finer spirits," said he, "till they have passed beyond reach of its envy or hearing of its praise. But his day of justice will come."

"Do you think so?" she said, drawing a little nearer, and looking up at him with the half-timid, half-trusting candour of a child. "Alas! I have almost given up hoping."

"Never give up hoping. There is nothing in this world so unstable as its injustice — nothing so inevitable as its law of reward and retribution. Unhappily its laurels are too often showered upon tombs."

"Did you know him in Italy?"

"No — in England."

"Perhaps you were one of his fellow-students?"

Mr. Trefalden shook his head.

"No; I am a true lover of the arts," he replied, "but no artist. I had a sincere admiration for your father's genius, Miss Rivière, and it is that admiration which brings me here to-day. I am anxious to know what pictures of his may still be in the possession of his family, and I should be glad to purchase some, if I might be allowed to do so."

A look of intense gladness, followed by one of still more intense pain, flashed over the girl's pale face at these words.

"I trust I have said nothing to annoy you," said Mr. Trefalden, as deferentially as if this fragile young creature were a stately princess, clad in cloth of gold and silver.

"Oh no, thank you," she replied, tremulously. "We shall be very glad to — to sell them."

"Then I have your permission to look at these?"

"I will show them to you."

But Mr. Trefalden would not suffer Miss Rivière to show him the pictures. They were too heavy, and too dusty; and he was so glad to have the opportunity of seeing them that he considered nothing a trouble. Then he begged to be allowed to remove the black blind from the window; and when that was done, he dragged out the first picture, dusted it carefully with his own white handkerchief, and placed it in the best light the room afforded.

"That was one of his last," said the daughter, with a sigh.

It represented Apollo and Daphne — Apollo in an attitude expressive of despair, looking very like a fine

gentleman in an amateur play, elegantly got up in the Greek style and rather proud of his legs; with Daphne peeping at him coquettishly from the leaves of a laurel bush. It was not a vulgar picture, nor even a glaringly bad picture; but it had all the worst faults of the French school with none of its vigour, and was academic and superficial to the last degree.

Mr. Trefalden, who saw all this distinctly, retreated, nevertheless, to the farther side of the room, shaded his eyes with his hands, and declared that it was an exquisite thing, full of poetry and classical feeling.

Then came a Cupid and Psyche on the point of leading off a pas-de-deux; a Danae in a cataract of yellow ochre; an Endymion sleeping, evidently, on a stage bank, by the light of a "practicable" moon; a Holy Family; a Cephalus and Procris; a Caractacus before Claudius; a Diana and Callisto, and about a score of others — enough to fill a gallery of moderate size; all after the same pattern; all repeating the same dreary round of hackneyed subjects; all equally correct and mediocre.

Mr. Trefalden looked patiently through the whole collection, opening out those canvases which were rolled up, and going through the business of his part with a naturalness that was beyond all praise. He dwelt on imaginary beauties, hesitated over trifling blemishes, reverted every now and then to his favourites, and, in short, played the enlightened connoisseur to such perfection that the poor child by his side was almost ready to fall down and worship him before the exhibition was over.

"How happy it would have made him to hear you,

sir;" she said, more than once. "No one ever appreciated his genius as you do!"

To which Mr. Trefalden only replied, with sympathetic courtesy, that he was "sorry to hear it."

Finally, he selected four of the least objectionable of the lot, and begged to know on what terms he might be allowed to possess them.

This question was referred by Miss Rivière to her mother, and Mr. Trefalden was finally entreated to name his own price.

"Nay but you place me in a very difficult position," said he. "What if I offer too small a sum?"

"We do not fear that," replied the young girl, with a timid smile.

"You are very good; but . . . the fact is that I may wish to purchase several more of these paintings — perhaps the whole of them, if Mrs. Rivière should be willing to part from them."

"The whole of them!" she echoed, breathlessly.

"I cannot tell at present; but it is not improbable."

Miss Rivière looked at Mr. Trefalden with awe and wonder. She began to think he must be some great collector — perhaps Rothschild himself!

"In the meanwhile," said he, "these being only my first acquisitions, I must keep my expenditure within a moderate limit. I should not like to offer more than two hundred pounds for these four paintings."

Two hundred pounds! It was as if a tributary of Pactolus had suddenly flowed in upon that humble front parlour and flooded it with gold. Miss Rivière could hardly believe in the material existence of so fabulous a sum.

"I hope I do not seem to under-estimate their value," said the lawyer.

"Oh, no — indeed!"

"You will, perhaps, submit my proposition to Mrs. Rivière?"

"No, thank you — I — I — am quite sure — your great liberality . . ."

"I beg you will call it by no such name," said Mr. Trefalden, with that little deprecatory gesture that showed his fine hand to so much advantage. "Say, if you please, my sense of justice, or, better still, my appreciation of excellence."

Here he took a little roll of bank-notes from his purse, and laid them on the table.

"I trust I may be permitted to pay my respects to Mrs. Rivière when I next call," he said. "She will not, perhaps, refuse the favour of an interview to one who knew her husband in his youth."

"I am sure mamma will be most happy," faltered Miss Rivière. "She is very delicate; but I know she will make the effort, if possible. We — we are going back soon to Italy."

And her eyes, as she said this, wandered involuntarily towards the packet of notes.

"Not *very* soon, I hope? Not immediately?"

"Certainly not immediately," she replied, with a sigh. "Mamma must be much better before she can travel."

Then Mr. Trefalden made a few politely sympathetic inquiries; recommended a famous West-end physician; suggested a temporary sojourn at Sydenham or Norwood; and ended by requesting that the hostile maid-servant might fetch a cab for the conveyance of

his treasures. He then took his leave, with the intimation that he would come again in the course of a few days, and go over the pictures a second time.

The door had no sooner closed behind him, than Miss Rivière flew up to her mother's bed-room, with the bank-notes in her hand.

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" she cried, flinging herself on her knees beside the invalid's easy-chair, and bursting into sobs of joy, "he has taken four of papa's paintings, and given — oh! what do you suppose? — given two hundred pounds for them! Two hundred pounds, all in beautiful, real bank-notes — and here they are! Touch them — look at them! Two hundred pounds — enough to take you to Italy, my darling, six times over!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Bradshaw's Guide for March.

William Trefalden sat alone in his private room in a somewhat moody attitude, with his elbows on his desk, and his face buried in his hands. A folded deed lay unread before him. To his right stood a compact pile of letters with their seals yet unbroken. Absorbed in profound thought, he had not yet begun the business of the day, although more than an hour had elapsed since his arrival in Chancery Lane.

His meditations were interrupted by a tap at the door; and the tap was instantaneously followed by Mr. Keckwitch. The lawyer started angrily from his reverie.

"Why the deuce do you come in like that?" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"Beg your pardon, sir," replied the head-clerk, with a rapid glance at the pile of unopened letters and the unread deed. "Messenger's waitin' for Willis and Barlow's bond; and you said I was to read it over to you before it went out."

Mr. Trefalden sighed impatiently, leaned back in his chair, and bade his clerk "go on;" whereat the respectable man drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and began.

"Know all men by these presents that we, Thomas Willis of number fourteen Charlcote Square in the parish of Hoxton in the county of Middlesex, and John Barlow of Oakley Villa in the parish of Brompton in the county of Middlesex Esquire, are jointly and severally holden and firmly bounden unto Ebenezer Foster and Robert Crompton of Cornhill in the parish of St. Peters upon Cornhill in the county of Middlesex Bankers and copartners in the sum of five thousand pounds of lawful British money to be paid to the said Ebenezer Foster and Robert Crompton their executors administrators and assigns or their lawful attorney and attorneys for which payment to be well and faithfully made we bind ourselves jointly and severally and our and any two or one of our heirs executors and administrators firmly by these presents sealed with our respective seals. Dated .... which I have left blank, sir, not knowing when the signatures will be made."

"Quite right," said Mr. Trefalden, dreamily. "Go on."

The head-clerk then proceeded in the same thick, monotonous tone, wading on from stage to stage, from condition to condition, till he came at length to — "Then and in such case the above written bond or

obligation shall become void and of no effect, or else shall remain in full force, power, and virtue;" having read which he came to a dead pause.

And then again, for the third time, Mr. Trefalden said: —

"Go on."

Mr. Keckwitch smiled maliciously.

"That's the end of the deed, sir," he replied.

"The end of the deed?"

"Yes, sir. It struck me that you didn't hear much of it. Shall I go through it again?"

Mr. Trefalden bit his lip.

"Certainly not," he said, sharply. "That voice of yours sends me to sleep. Leave the bond with me, and I will glance over it myself."

So saying, he snatched the paper from the hand of his clerk, pointed to the door, and compelled himself to go through the document from beginning to end.

This done, and the messenger despatched, he dropped again into his accustomed seat, and proceeded mechanically to examine his diurnal correspondence. But only mechanically; for though he began with the top letter, holding it open with his left hand, and shading his eyes with his right, there was that in his thoughts which blotted out the sense of the words as completely as if the page were blank before him.

By-and-by, after staring at it vacantly for some ten minutes or more, William Trefalden crushed the letter in his hand, flung it on the table, and exclaiming half aloud, "Fool that I am!" pushed his chair hastily back, and began walking up and down the room.

Sometimes fast, sometimes slowly, sometimes stopping short in his beat for a minute at a time, the

lawyer continued for the best part of an hour to pace to and fro between the window and the door, thinking earnestly.

Of what? Of a woman.

He could scarcely bring himself to confess it to his own thoughts; and yet so it was — a fact not to be evaded, impossible to be ignored. William Trefalden was in love for the first time in his life; utterly, passionately in love.

Yes, for the first time. He was thirty-eight years of age, and he had never in his life known what it was to feel as he felt now. He had never known what it was to live under the despotism of a single idea. He was not a good man. He was an unscrupulous and radically selfish man. A man of cultivated taste, cold heart, and iron will. A man who set his own gratification before him as the end for which he lived, and who was content to labour for that end as untiringly and stedfastly as other men labour for honour or freedom, or their soul's salvation. A man who knew no law save the law of his own will, and no restraint save the restraint of his own judgment.

Up to this time he had regarded love as a taste, and looked upon women much in the same light as he looked upon fine wines, fine pictures, costly books, or valuable horses. They were one of the enjoyments of life — rather more troublesome, though perhaps not much more expensive than some other enjoyments; needing to be well-dressed, as books to be well-bound, or pictures well-framed; needing also, like valuable horses, to be kindly treated; but, like horses, to be held or changed at the pleasure of their owners.

Such was the theory, and such (for the secret may

as well be told here as elsewhere) was the practice of William Trefalden's life. He was no gamester. He was no miser. He was no usurer. He was simply that dangerous phenomenon — a man of cold heart and warm imagination; a refined voluptuary.

And this was the secret which for long years he had guarded with such jealous care. He loved splendour, luxury, pleasure. He loved elegant surroundings, a well-appointed table, well-trained servants, music, pictures, books, fine wines, fine eyes, and fine tobacco. For these things he had toiled harder than the poorest clerk in his employ. For these things he had risked danger and disgrace; and yet now, when he held the game on which he had staked his whole life already in his hand — now, in the very moment of success — this man found that the world contained one prize to obtain which he would willingly have given all the rest — nay, without which all the rest would be no longer worth possession.

Only a girl! Only a pale, pretty, dark-haired girl, with large, timid eyes, and a soft voice, and a colour that came and went fitfully when she spoke. A girl with ancient blood in her veins, and a certain child-like purity of bearing that told, at the first glance, how she must be neither lightly sought nor lightly won. A girl who, though she might be poor to beggary, could no more be bought like a toy, than could an angel be bought from heaven.

It was surely madness for William Trefalden to love such a girl as Helen Rivière! He knew that it was madness. He had a dim feeling that it might be ruin. He struggled against it — he fought with it —

he flung himself into work — but all in vain. He was no longer master of his thoughts. If he read, the page seemed to have no meaning for him; if he tried to think, his mind wandered; if he slept, that girlish face troubled his dreams, and tormented him with despair and longing. For the first time in his life, he found himself the slave of a power which it was vain to resist. Well might he pace to and fro in utter restlessness of mind and body! Well might he curse his fate and his folly, and chafe against the chain that he was impotent to break! He had known strong impulses, angry passions, eager desires, often enough in the course of his undisciplined life; but never, till now, that passion or desire which was stronger than his own imperial will.

In the meanwhile the soul of Abel Keckwitch was disquieted within him. His quick ear caught the restless echo in the inner room, and he felt more than ever convinced that there was "something wrong somewhere." Mr. Trefalden had not opened his letters. Mr. Trefalden had not read the deed which awaited him upon his desk. Mr. Trefalden had not attended to a word of the important bond which he, Abel Keckwitch, notwithstanding his asthma, had laboriously read aloud to him from beginning to end. Nor was this all. Mr. Trefalden looked pale and anxious, like a man who had not slept the night before, and was obviously troubled in his mind. These were significant facts — facts very perplexing and tormenting; and Mr. Keckwitch sorely taxed his ingenuity to interpret them aright.

In the midst of his conjectures, Mr. Trefalden, who had an appointment in the Temple for half-past twelve, came out of his private room, and, glancing round the office, said: —

"Where are those paintings that I brought home the other day?"

Mr. Keckwitch tucked his pen behind his ear, and coughed before replying.

"In the cupboard behind the door, sir," said he. "I put 'em there — to be out of sight."

Mr. Trefalden opened the cupboard door, saw that the pictures were safe within, and, after a moment's hesitation, said: —

"I took them for a bad debt, but they are of no use to me. You can have them, Keckwitch, if you like."

"I, sir!" exclaimed the head-clerk, in accents of virtuous horror. "No, thank you, sir. None of your heathen Venuses for me. I should be ashamed to see 'em on the walls."

"As you please. At all events, anyone who likes to take them is welcome to do so."

Saying which, Mr. Trefalden, with a slightly scornful gravity, left his clerks to settle the question of ownership among themselves, and went on his way. The pictures were, of course, had out immediately, and became the objects of a good deal of tittering, tossing up, and wit of the smallest kind. In the meanwhile, the head-clerk found a pretext for going to his master's room, and instituted a rapid search for any stray scrap of information that might turn up.

It was a forlorn hope. Mr. Keckwitch had done the same thing a hundred times before, and had never found anything; save, now and then, a few charred ashes in the empty grate. But it was in his nature to persevere doggedly. On the present occasion he examined the papers on the table, lifted the lid of William

Trefalden's desk, peered between the leaves of the blotting-book, and examined the table-drawers in which the lawyer kept his stationery. In the latter he found but one unaccustomed article — an old Continental Bradshaw for the month of March.

"It wasn't there this morning," mused this amateur detective, taking up the Guide and turning it over inquisitively. "It's the same he had when he went to that place in Switzerland — page turned down and all."

And then Mr. Keckwitch uttered a suppressed exclamation, for the turned-down page was in the midst of the Italian itinerary.

"Lucca — Magadino — Mantua — Mentone — Milan."

What, in Heaven's name, could William Trefalden have to do with Lucca, Magadino, Mantua, Mentone, or Milan? How was it possible that any one of these places should be mixed up with the cause of his present restlessness and pre-occupation?

The clerk was fairly puzzled. Finding, however, no further clue in any part of the volume, he returned to his desk and applied himself to a diligent search of the financial columns of the "Times."

He would have been still more puzzled if at that moment he could have seen William Trefalden, with the same weary, half-impatient look upon his face, leaning over the parapet of the Temple Gardens, and staring down idly at the river. It was just one o'clock — the quietest hour of the day in nursemaid haunted squares — and the lawyer had the place to himself. All was still and dreamy in the old gardens. Not a leaf stirred on the trees. Not a sound disturbed the cloistered silence. The very sky was grey and wintry.

unbroken by a sunbeam or a cloud. Presently a barge drifted by with the current; while far away, from crowded bridge and busy street, there rose a deep and distant hum, unlike all other sounds with which the ear of man is familiar.

It was a dreamy day and a dreamy place, and, busy man as he was, Mr. Trefalden was, to all appearance, as dreamy as either. But it is possible to be dreamy on the surface, and wakeful enough beneath it; and Mr. Trefalden's dreaminess was of that outward sort alone. All moody quiet without, he was all doubt, fever, and perturbation within. Project after project, resolution after resolution, kept rising like bubbles to the troubled surface of his thoughts — rising, breaking, vanishing, and giving place to others. Thus an hour went by, and Mr. Trefalden, hearing the church clocks strike two, roused himself with the air of a man whose course is resolved upon, and went out through Temple Bar, into the Strand. His course was resolved upon. He had made up his mind never to see Helen Rivière again; and yet . . . . .

And yet, before he had reached the gates of Somerset House he had hailed a cab, and desired the driver to take him to Brudenell Terrace, Camberwell!

In the meanwhile Mr. Keckwitch, who had been anxiously studying the closing prices of all sorts of Italian Railway, Banking, Telegraphic and Land Companies' Stock, believed that he had found the key to his employer's trouble when he read that the Great Milanese Loan and Finance Company's Six per Cent. Bonds were down to sixteen and a-half in the official list.

CHAPTER XV.

Helen Rivière.

Born and bred on the top floor of a gloomy old house in a still gloomier by-street of Florence, Helen Rivière had spent her childhood in a solitude almost as far removed from the busy press and shock of ordinary life as if she had been reared in a highland bothy, half-way betwixt the earth and sky. All the circumstances of her home and her home-life were exceptional. She had known none of the companionship and few of the joys of childhood. No rambles in green fields and purple vineyards, no pleasant rivalry of school-class and playground, no early friendships, with their innocent joys and sorrows, had ever been hers. Her mother was her one playmate, instructor, and friend. The flat house-top with its open loggia, its tubs of orange-trees and myrtles, and its boxes of nasturtiums and mignonette, was her only playground. From thence she saw the burning sunsets and the violet hills; from thence looked down on dome and campanile, crowded street and mediæval palace. This bird's-eye view of the rare old city, with such echoes of its life as found their way to her upper world, was almost all that Helen knew of Florence. Now and then, at very distant intervals, she had been led down into that busy lower world, to wander for a few hours through streets and piazzas stately with fountains and statues, or galleries so radiant with Madonnas and angels that they seemed like the vestibules of Heaven; but this was very seldom.

Yet the child had, as it were, breathed all her life in an atmosphere of art. She could not remember the time when its phraseology and appliances were other than familiar to her. Her father's dimly lighted studio, redolent of oil and varnish and littered with canvases and casts; her father himself in his smeared blouse and velvet cap, painting his unsaleable nymphs and dryads year after year with unabated enthusiasm; the lay figure in its folds of dusty drapery; the shabby *studenti* with their long hair and professional jargon, who used to drop in at twilight to smoke their cheap cigars upon the terraced roof, and declaim about art and liberty; the habit of observation insensibly acquired, and her own natural delight in form and colour, all combined to mould her inclinations and train her taste from earliest infancy. As a little child, she used to scrawl in pencil till her father taught her the rudiments of drawing. By-and-by, as she grew older and more skilful, she learned to colour prints and photographs for sale, and, some few months before her father died, had begun to study the art of enamel-painting.

Isolated thus in the heart of an ancient city; looking down upon the alien throng in street and market-place; watching the golden sunlight fade and change on Giotto's bell-tower and Brunelleschi's rust-brown dome; listening to the clang of bells at morn and even-song, and catching now and then faint echoes of chanted hymn or military march; growing daily more and more familiar with the glories of Italian skies; reading few books, seeing few faces, and ignorant of life and the world as a cloistered nun, this young girl spent the first years of her solitary youth. And they were very happy years, although — nay, perhaps *be-*

cause — they were so solitary. Having few ties, few tastes, few occupations, her character became more intense, her aims more concentrated than those of most very young women. She loved her mother with a passionate devotion that knew no limit to obedience and tenderness. She reverenced and admired her father with so blind a faith in his genius, that, despite her better knowledge, she believed even in the nymphs and dryads with all her tender heart. If her reading had been circumscribed it had at least been thorough. Shakspere and Milton, Dante and the Bible, made the best part of her library; but she had read and re-read these books, thought about them for herself, treasured up long passages from them in her memory, and gathered from their pages more poetry, wisdom, and knowledge than ever came off the shelves of a modern circulating library. Nor were these the only advantages of her secluded life. Never having known wealth, she was poor without being conscious of poverty — just as she was pure, because she had seen no evil — just as she was happy, because she coveted no blessings which were not already hers.

But at length there came a time when this simple home was to be made desolate. The unsuccessful painter fell ill and died, leaving his wife to the cold charity of Lady Castletowers. In an evil hour she travelled home to England, thinking so to conciliate her haughty sister and serve her child. But Lady Castletowers declined to see her; and the bitter English winter smote upon her delicate lungs and brought her to the verge of the grave; and for this it was that Helen Rivière went down to Castletowers, and prayed her

haughty aunt for such trifling succour as should take them back in time to the sweet south.

Just at this crisis, like a prince in a fairy tale, Mr. Trefalden made his appearance in their dreary London lodging, bringing with him hope and liberty, and his cousin Saxon's gold. If his story were not true, if he had never known Edgar Rivière in his life, if he despised the pictures he affected to praise, how were they to detect it? Enlightened connoisseur, munificent patron, disinterested friend that he was, how should the widow and orphan suspect that he purchased his claim to those titles with another man's money?

CHAPTER XVI.

Saxon Conquestor.

Saxon Trefalden, writing letters as he sat by the open window in his pleasant bed-room at Castletowers, laid his pen aside, and looked out wistfully at the sky and the trees. The view over the park from this point was not extensive; but it was green and sunny; and as the soft air came and went, bringing with it a faint perfume of distant hay, the young man thought of his pastoral home in the old Etruscan Canton far away.

He knew, as well as if he were gazing upon them from that tiny shelf of orchard ground at Rotzberg, how the grey, battlemented ridge of the Ringel was standing out against the deep blue sky; how tenderly the shadows lay in the unmelted snowdrifts in the hollows of the Galanda; and how the white slopes of the

far-off Julier-Alp were glittering in the sun. He knew, as well as if he were listening to them, how the goat-bells were making pleasant music to the brawling of the Hinter Rhine below; and how the pines were falling every now and then with a sullen crash, beneath the measured blows of the woodman's axe. And then he sighed, and went back to his task.

A pile of hastily scribbled notes to London acquaintances and tradesmen lay on one side, ready for the post-bag; and he was now writing a long letter to his Uncle Martin — a long, long letter, full of news, and bright projects, and written in Saxon's clearest and closest hand. Long as it was, however, it was not finished, and would not be finished till the morrow. He had something yet to add to it; and that something although it could not be added now, was perplexing him not a little as he sat, pen in hand, looking out absently at the shadows that swept over the landscape.

He had made up his mind to propose to Olimpia Colonna.

He had told himself over and over again that the man who aspired to her hand should be a prince, a hero, a soldier, an ardent patriot, at the least; and yet, modest as he was of his own merit, he could no longer doubt that his proposal would be accepted whenever he should have the courage to make it. Lady Castletowers, who had shown a great deal of condescending interest in him of late, had dropped more than one flattering hint with the view of urging him forward in his suit. Colonna's bearing towards him, ever since the day when he had given in his subscription, had been almost significantly cordial; and Olimpia's smiles

were lavish of encouragement. Already he had been more than once on the brink of an avowal: and now, as the last week of his visit was drawing to a close, and his letter to Switzerland awaited despatch, he had fairly reviewed his position and come to the conclusion that he would make Miss Colonna a formal offer of his hand in the course of that same day.

"If she really doesn't love me," said he, half-aloud, as he sat biting the end of his pen and staring down at the unfinished page, "she'll say so, and there will be an end of it. If she *does* love me — and, somehow, I cannot believe it! — why, although she is a million times too good, and too beautiful, and too high-born for an uncivilised mountaineer such as I, I will do my best, with God's help, to be worthy of her choice."

And then he thought of all the intoxicating looks and smiles with which Olimpia had received his awkward homage; and the more he considered these things the more clearly he saw, and marvelled at, the distinction that had befallen him.

And yet he was by no means beside himself with happiness — perhaps, because, if the truth must be confessed, he was not very deeply in love. He admired Olimpia Colonna intensely. He thought her the most beautiful and high-minded woman under heaven; but, after all, he did not feel for her that profound, and tender, and passionate sympathy which had been the dream of his boyhood. Even now, when most completely under the spell of her influence, he was vaguely conscious of this want. Even now, in the very moment of anticipated triumph, when his heart beat high at the thought of winning her, he found himself

wondering whether he should be able to make her happy — whether she would love his Uncle Martin — whether she would always be quite as much absorbed in Italian politics and Italian liberty?

When he had arrived at this point, he was interrupted by a tap at the door and a voice outside asking if there was "any admission?"

"Always, for you," replied Saxon; whereupon the Earl opened the door and came in.

"There!" said he, "you're writing letters, and don't want me."

"On the contrary, I have written all that are to be posted to-day, and am glad to be interrupted. There's the rocking chair at your service."

"Thanks. May I take a cigar?"

"Twenty, if you will. And now, what news since breakfast?"

"A good deal, I suspect," replied the Earl, moodily. "Montecuculi's here."

"Who is Montecuculi?"

"One of our Central Committee men — an excellent fellow; descended from the Montecuculis of Ferrara. One of his ancestors poisoned a Dauphin of France, and was torn to pieces for it by four horses, ever so many centuries ago."

"He did no such thing," said Saxon. "The Dauphin died of inflammation brought on by his own imprudence; and Montecuculi was barbarously murdered. It was always so in those hateful middle ages. When a prince died, his physicians invariably proclaimed that he was poisoned; and then some wretched victim was sure to be broken on the wheel, or torn to pieces."

"The physicians did it to excuse their want of skill, I suppose," remarked the Earl.

"Or else because princes were too august to catch colds and fevers, like other men."

"There spoke the republican."

"But where is this Montecuculi?"

"Shut up with Colonna in his den. He brings important news from the seat of war; but at present I only know that Garibaldi has achieved some brilliant success, and that our guests are leaving us in all haste."

"What, the Colonnas?"

"Yes, the Colonnas."

"But not to-day?"

"This evening, immediately after dinner."

Saxon's countenance fell.

"That is quick work," said he. "Where are they going?"

"To London."

"Is anything the matter?"

"Nothing — except that a Genoese deputy is hourly expected, and our friends are summoned to meet him."

"Then they will come back to you again?"

"Not a chance of it. The present is an important crisis, and we have a whole round of special committees and public meetings coming on in London and elsewhere. No — we shall not see them down again at Castletowers this year. They will have more than enough of active work on hand for the next week or two; and then, no doubt, they will be off to Italy."

Saxon was silent. Having once resolved on a *course of action*, it was not in him to be turned aside

by small obstacles; and he was now thinking how, in the midst of all this hurry of departure, he should obtain his interview with Miss Colonna.

"This place will be as lively as a theatre by daylight when you are all gone," observed the Earl, presently.

"You must come up to town," replied Saxon. "I had a note from Burgoyne this morning, in which he says that London is fuller than ever."

Lord Castletowers shook his head.

"I shall run up occasionally for a few hours at a time," said he, "while these meetings are being held; but I shall not be able to make any stay."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot afford it."

"Nonsense! What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say. I am a poor man, my dear fellow — which fact I believe you have heard me state before — and although I look upon a good London hotel as the first stage on the road to Paradise, and upon a fortnight in town during the best of the season as pure beatitude, I can seldom afford to indulge my taste for either."

"But I should have thought, with a place like this . . . . ."

"That's just what it is!" replied the Earl, knocking off the ash from his cigar, and rocking himself dismally to and fro. It's a dear old place, and I wouldn't exchange it for Aladdin's palace of jewels; but it costs me every farthing of my income merely to live in it. I was left, you see, with an encumbered estate; and in order to clear it, I was obliged to sell three of the best *little farms in the county*. I even sold a slice of the

old park, and that was the greatest sorrow of my life."

"I can well believe it," said Saxon.

"Consequently, I am now obliged to do the best I can with a large house and a small income."

"Still you have cleared off the encumbrances?"

The Earl nodded.

"All of them?"

"Yes, thank Heaven! all."

Saxon drew his chair a little nearer, and looked his friend earnestly in the face.

"Pray don't think me impertinent," said he; "but — but I've seen you looking anxious at times — and somehow I have fancied . . . . . Would you mind telling me, Castletowers, if you have really any trouble on your mind? Any outstanding claim, for instance, that — that . . ."

"That a generous fellow like yourself could help me to meet? No, Trefalden — not one. I thank you heartily for your kind thought, but I owe no man a penny."

Saxon drew a deep breath of satisfaction. He would scarcely have liked to confess, even to himself, with how keen a sense of relief he found his cousin's statement corroborated.

"I rejoice to hear it," he replied. "And now, Castletowers, you must promise that you will go up with me the day after to-morrow, and make my rooms your hotel. I have three there in St. James's Street, and I can have a couple more if I like; and you don't know how lonely I feel in them."

"You are goodnature itself," said the Earl; "but indeed . . . . ."

"It's not good nature — it's pure selfishness. I like London. I am intensely interested in its multitudinous life and intellectual activity; but it is a terrible place to live in all alone. If, however, I had a couple of rooms which I might call your rooms, and which I knew you would occupy whenever you were in town, the place would seem more like home to me."

"But, my dear Trefalden . . . . ."

"One moment, please! I know, of course, that it is, in one sense, a monstrous presumption on my part to ask you to do this. You are an English peer, and I am a Swiss peasant; but then you have received me here as your guest, and treated me as if I were your equal . . . . ."

"Trefalden, hear me," interrupted the Earl, vehemently. "You know my political creed — you know that, setting friendship, virtue, education aside, I hold all men to be literally and absolutely equal under heaven?"

"Yes, as an abstract principle . . . . ."

"Precisely so — as an abstract principle. But abstract and concrete are two very different things; and permit me to tell you that I have the honour and happiness of knowing two men who, so far as I am competent to judge myself and them, are as immeasurably superior to me in all that constitutes true nobility, as if there were no such principle as equality under the sun. And those two men are Giulio Colonna and Saxon Trefalden."

Saxon laughed and coloured up.

"What reply can I make to such a magnificent compliment?" said he.

"Beg my pardon, I should think, for the speech that provoked it."

"But do you really mean it?"

"Every word of it."

"Then I will go up to town a day sooner, and prepare your rooms at once. If that's your opinion of me, you can't refuse to grant the first favour I have ever asked at your hands."

The Earl smiled and shook his head.

"We will talk of that by-and-by," he said. "If I have not consented, it is through no want of confidence in your friendship."

"I should look upon that consent as a strong proof of yours," said Saxon.

"I came to your room to-day, Trefalden, to give you a much stronger proof of it," replied the Earl, gravely.

The words were simple enough, but something in he tone in which they were uttered arrested Saxon's attention.

"You may be sure that I shall value it, whatever it may be," said he; and waited for Lord Castletowers to proceed.

But the Earl was, apparently, in no haste to do so. Swaying idly to and fro, and watching the light smoke of his cigar, he remained for some moments silent, as if hesitating how and where to begin. At length he said: —

"I do believe, Trefalden, that you are the best fellow breathing."

"That I certainly am not," replied Saxon; "so pray don't think it."

"But I do think it; and it is just because I think

it that I am here now. I want to tell you something."

Saxon bent his head, and listened.

"Something which I have been keeping to myself for years, because — well, because I have never had a friend to whom I could confide it — I mean a really intimate friend whom I could trust, as I know I may trust you."

"Thank you," said Saxon, simply.

"I have felt the want of such a one, bitterly," continued the Earl. "It's hard to be for ever brooding over one idea, without being able to seek sympathy or counsel."

"I should think it must be," replied Saxon; "but I've never had a secret of my own."

"Then, Trefalden," said the Earl, throwing away the end of his cigar with a very gloomy look, "you have never been in love."

Saxon made no reply. He had fully anticipated some confidence on the subject of money, and his friend's rejoinder took him by surprise.

Had he been asked, he could not have told why it was so; but the surprise, somehow, was not a pleasant one.

"The truth is," said the Earl, "I am a very unlucky, and a very miserable fellow. I love a woman whom I have no hope of marrying."

"How is that?"

"Because I am poor, and she has nothing — because I could not bear to act in opposition to my mother's wishes — because . . . . . in short, because the woman I love is Olimpia Colonna."

Saxon's heart gave one throb — just one — as

Castletowers spoke the name; and then his breath seemed to come short, and he was afraid to speak, lest his voice should be unsteady.

"Had you guessed my secret?" asked the Earl.

Saxon shook his head.

"I feel sure my mother has guessed it, long since; but she has entire confidence in my honour, and has never breathed a syllable to me on the subject. All her hope is that I may repair our shattered fortunes by a wealthy marriage. Proud as she is — and my mother is a very proud woman, Trefalden — she would rather see me marry that rich Miss Hatherton whose father was a common miner, than Olimpia Colonna with her eight hundred years of glorious ancestry!"

"Eight hundred years!" repeated Saxon, mechanically.

"It is one of the noblest families in Europe," continued the Earl. "The Colonnas were sovereign Dukes and Princes when the Pierrepoints were Norman Counts, and the Wynnecliffes simple Esquires. They have given many Cardinals to Rome, and one Pope. They have repeatedly held the rank of Viceroys of Naples, Sicily, and Arragon; and they have numbered among them some of the greatest generals and noblest scholars of the middle ages. I tell you, Trefalden, it is incomprehensible to me how my mother, who attaches such profound importance to birth, should weigh gold against blood in such a question as this!"

He paused, beating the floor with his foot, and too much absorbed in his own story to pay much heed to his listener.

"But then, you see," he continued presently, "money is not the only obstacle. The man who marries

Olimpia Colonna must go heart and soul, hand and fortune, into the Italian cause. I would do it, willingly. I would melt my last ounce of plate, cut down my last timber, mortgage the roof over my head, if I had only myself to consider. But how is it possible? I cannot reduce my mother to beggary."

"Of course not."

And then there was another pause. At length the Earl looked up suddenly, and said,

"Well now, Trefalden, what is your advice?"

"Advice!" stammered Saxon. "You ask *me* for advice?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But I — I, who know so little of life and the world — how can I advise you?"

"It is just for that reason — because you are so unbiassed by conventional prejudice and worldly wisdom — that I attach a peculiar value to your opinion. Tell me what you think I ought to do. Should I, for instance, talk it over with my mother, or speak to Colonna first? He is her oldest friend, and his opinion has great weight with her. There lies my chief hope. If he were with me, I do not think she would persist in any lengthened opposition. Besides, I would do anything to make up for Olimpia's want of fortune. I know I could make myself a good position in the Upper House, if I chose to read up facts, and study home-questions. Or I would cultivate my influential friends, and try to get some foreign diplomatic appointment. In short, give me but the motive, and I will do anything!"

"But these are matters of which I know nothing."

"I am not asking you how I shall push my way

in the future, my dear Saxon," replied the Earl, eagerly; "but how you think I ought to act in the present. What would you do yourself, if you were in my position?"

Saxon, sitting a little away from the light, with his elbow resting on the table and his head supported by his hand, looked down thoughtfully, and hesitated before replying. His friend had given him a hard problem to solve — a bitter task to perform.

"Are you sure that you love her?" he said presently, speaking somewhat slowly.

"As sure as that yonder sun is now shining in the heavens! Why, Trefalden, she was the ideal of my boyhood; and for the last four years, since she has been staying with us so often, and for so many months at a time, I have loved her with the deepest love that man can give to woman."

"And do you think that — that she loves you?"

Do what he would, Saxon could not quite keep down the tremor in his voice as he asked this question; but the Earl was too intensely pre-occupied to observe it.

"A year ago — nay, three months ago," said he, "I was certain of it. Latterly, I cannot tell why, there has been a constraint — a coldness — as if she were trying to crush out the feeling from her own heart, and the hope from mine. And yet, somehow, I feel as if the change went no deeper than the surface."

"You believe, in short, that Miss Colonna loves you still?"

"By Heaven, Trefalden, I do!" replied the Earl, passionately.

"You have not asked her?"

"Certainly not. She was my guest."

Saxon covered his eyes for a moment with his hand, as if in profound thought. It was an eventful moment — a cruel moment — the first moment of acute suffering that he had ever known. No one but himself ever knew how sharp a fight he fought while it lasted — a fight from which he came out wounded and bleeding, but a conqueror. When he lifted up his face, it was pale to the very lips, but steady and resolved.

"Then, Castletowers," he said — and his voice had no faltering in it — "I will tell you what I would do if — if I were in your place. I would learn the truth from her own lips, first of all."

"But my mother . . . ."

"Lady Castletowers will acquiesce when she knows that your happiness is involved. It is but a question of fortune, after all."

The Earl sprang to his feet, and began pacing to and fro.

"It is welcome counsel," said he. "If I only dared — if I were but sure . . . . and yet, is it not better to know the worst at once?"

"Far better," replied Saxon, drearily.

Lord Castletowers went over to the window, and leaned out into the sunshine.

"Why should I not?" he mused, half aloud. "If I fail, I shall be no poorer than I am now — except in hope! Except in hope! But if I succeeded . . . . Ah! if I succeed!"

His face grew radiant at the thought.

"Yes, Trefalden," he exclaimed, "you are right. Why set myself to overcome so many obstacles if,

when all is done, I am to find that I have had my toil for nothing? I *will* ask her. I will ask her this very day — this very hour, if I can find her alone. It will be no breach of hospitality to do so now. Thanks — thanks a thousand times!"

Saxon shook his head.

"You have nothing to thank me for, Castletowers," he replied.

"For your counsel," said the Earl.

"Which may bring you sorrow, remember."

"Then for your friendship!"

"Well, yes — for my friendship. You have that, if it is worth your thanks."

"Time will show what value I place upon it," replied the Earl. "And now, for the present, adieu. I know you wish me success."

With this, he grasped Saxon warmly by the hand, and hurried from the room. When the last echo of his foot had died away on stair and corridor, the young man went over to the door, locked it, and sat quietly down, alone with his trouble. And it was in truth no light or imaginary trouble. He saw, clearly enough, that he must accept one of two things — both equally bitter. Either Olimpia Colonna had never loved him, or he had supplanted his friend in her affections. Which was it? His heart told him.

CHAPTER XVII.

How the Earl sped in his Wooing.

It was a hurried, uncomfortable afternoon at Castletowers, and Signor Colonna's visitor had brought nothing but confusion to the house. The news was really important news to those whom it concerned; but there was nothing which Lady Castletowers disliked so much as excitemcnt, nothing in her eyes so undignified as haste, and she was therefore not a little displeased by this sudden breaking up of her party. It was nothing to her that Garibaldi had won a great battle at Calatafimi, and was marching fast upon Palermo. She only knew that the Walkingshaws and Miss Hatherton were coming to dine with her that very day; that Signor Montecuculi would make one too many at the table; and that the departure of the Colonnas immediately after dinner would spoil the evening.

In the meanwhile Signor Colonna was deep in consultation with the new comer; Olimpia, assisted by one of the maids, was busy packing her father's books and papers; the Earl was wandering disconsolately to and fro, seeking his opportunity; and Saxon Trefalden, mounted on his swiftest thoroughbred, was galloping towards the hills, determined to leave a clear field for his friend, and not to come back till the first dinner-bell should be ringing.

At length, as the afternoon wore on, the Earl grew tired of waiting about the drawing-rooms and staircase, and sought Olimpia in her father's quarters. There he found her, not in Colonna's own den, but in the room

immediately beneath it, kneeling before a huge army trunk more than half filled with pamphlets, letters, despatches, maps, and documentary lumber of every description. More books and papers littered the floor and table, and these the servant was dusting previous to their being sorted and tied up by Miss Colonna.

"Can I be of any service?" asked the Earl, as he peeped in through the half-opened door.

Olimpia looked up with a pleasant smile.

"Are you really in want of something to do?" said she.

"Greatly."

"Then you may help to sort these papers. Among them are some dozens of last year's reports. You can arrange those according to date, and tie them up in parcels of about eighteen or twenty."

The Earl set about his task with much seeming alacrity.

"We owe Montecuculi a grudge for this," he said, presently. "Who would have thought this morning at breakfast that you would strike your tents and flee away into the great London desert before night?"

"Who would have thought that we should have such glorious cause for breaking up our camp?" retorted Olimpia, with enthusiasm.

"No one, indeed. And yet I wish the news had not travelled quite so quickly."

"Good news cannot fly too fast," replied Olimpia. "I scarcely dare trust myself to think what the next may be."

"At least do not hope too much."

"Nay, I have desponded long enough. Hope has been for so many years a forbidden luxury that I feel

as if I could not now drink of it too deeply. I hope all things. I expect all things. I believe that the hour is come at last, and that miracles will be accomplished within the next few months."

The Earl, thinking more of his own hopes and fears at that moment than of Italy or the Italians, wished with all his heart that a miracle could be accomplished then and there for the translation of the housemaid to any convenient planet.

"I should not be surprised," continued Olimpia, "if I heard to-morrow that Garibaldi was in Messina — or that he had crossed the straits and carried Naples by a *coup de main!*"

"Nor I," replied Castletowers, abstractedly.

And then for a few moments they were both silent. In the midst of their silence, a bell rang long and loudly in some part of the office below.

"What bell is that?" asked the Earl, who had heard it thousands of times in the course of his home-life, and knew its import perfectly.

"It's the servants' hall bell, my lord," replied the housemaid.

"And what does it mean, then — the servants' tea?"

"Yes, my lord."

Olimpia took the Earl's little bait immediately.

"You need not mind the rest of those papers now, Jane," she said, good-naturedly. "Go down at once, and come back when you have had tea."

Whereupon the housemaid, duly grateful, left the room.

And now Lord Castletowers had only to speak. The coveted opportunity was his at last; but it was no

sooner his than he lost his presence of mind, and found himself without a word to say.

Presently Olimpia looked up, and spoke again.

"How hard a thing it is," said she, "to be a woman — a mere woman! How hard to sit down tamely, day after day, listening to echoes of the battle-field — listening and waiting!"

"I am very glad you are listening from so safe a distance."

"And I pray that that distance may soon be lessened," she retorted, quickly. "We shall undoubtedly go to Genoa in the course of the next fortnight; and if my father crosses to Sicily, I do not mean to be left behind."

"But the Mediterranean swarms with Neapolitan war-steamers!" exclaimed the Earl.

Olimpia smiled.

"Besides, of what service could you be when there? You will perhaps say that you can do hospital work; but the hospitals do not want you. Ten per cent. of our volunteers are medical men, and I will venture to say that every woman in Sicily is a willing nurse."

"I would do any work that my head or hands could be trusted to perform," said she; "whether it were at the desk, or the bedside. Oh, that I could give my blood for the cause!"

"Men give their blood," replied the Earl; "but women the tears that make death sweet, and the smiles that make victory worth achieving."

Olimpia's lip curled scornfully.

"Our soldiers have nobler ends at stake than women's smiles!" said she.

The Earl was in despair. Nothing that he had said

seemed to find favour with Miss Colonna, and all this time the minutes were slipping away — the precious minutes for which there would be no recall.

"True friend to the cause as I am, Olimpia," said he, desperately, "if I were to go out, it would be as much for your sake as for the sake of your country; but I hope you would not scorn my sword for that reason."

Miss Colonna was taken by surprise. She had never been blind to the young man's admiration; but, having tacitly discouraged it for so long, she had taken it for granted that he would not venture on a declaration. Even now, though he had spoken words which could bear no other interpretation, she determined to put the thing aside and prevent him, if possible, from speaking more plainly. And yet her heart stirred strangely when he called her by her name!

"Yours is almost the only sword we should decline to enlist on any terms, Lord Castletowers," she replied, gravely. "You are an only son, and the last inheritor of a noble name. Your duties lie here."

"You would not think thus, if I were an Italian?"

"Certainly not. I should then say that your first duty was owing to your country."

The Earl came and stood before her, pale and earnest, and not to be turned from his purpose.

"Hear me, Olimpia," he said, passionately. "I love you, and you know that I love you. I have loved you for more than four years. I will not say that I have dared to hope. If I had hoped, I should not, perhaps, have kept silence so long; but I may have thought that you read my secret, and that silence might plead for me more eloquently than words. I know how

heavy the chances are against me — I have weighed them all, long since. I know that he who would aspire to your hand must love your Italy as if he were a son of the soil, must throw in his fortunes with her fortunes, and deserve you through his devotion to her cause. I also know that the man who had done all this would only have fulfilled those primary conditions without which the humblest red-shirt in Garibaldi's wake would stand a better chance than himself. Am I not right?"

"Perfectly; but——"

"Do not reply yet, I implore you! You say that I have duties here. It is true; and I am prepared to fulfil them to the utmost. I will settle this house and half my income on my mother for her life. All else that is mine, land, revenue, strength of body and will, personal influence, life itself, shall be Italy's. Your country shall be my country — your people, my people — your God, my God. Can I say more, except that I love you? That, deeply and dearly as I love you now, I believe from my soul I shall love you better still in years to come. In my eyes you will never be less young or less beautiful. Should sorrow or sickness come upon you, I will do all that man can do to cherish and comfort you. If you are in peril, I will die defending you. The love of my youth will be the love of my age; and what you are to me now, Olimpia, whether you reject or accept me, that you will be till my last hour!"

He paused. His manner, even more than his words, had been intense and eager, and now that his passionate appeal was all poured out, he waited for his sentence.

And Olimpia? Did she listen unmoved? She strove hard to do so; but she could not quite control the colour that came and went, or the tears that would not be stayed. One by one, as his pleading grew more earnest, they had slipped slowly over the dark lashes and down the oval cheek; and the Earl, who had never seen her shed a tear before, believed for one wild moment that his cause was won.

Her first words undeceived him.

"I am very sorry for this, Lord Castletowers," she said; and her voice, which was a little tremulous at first, became steady as she went on. "I would have given much that these words had never been spoken; for they are spoken in vain. I believe that you love me sincerely. I believe that I have never been so well loved — that I shall never be so well loved again; but — I cannot marry you."

"You will, at least, give me a reason!"

"To what end? That you might combat it? Do not ask it, my lord. Nothing that I could tell, nothing that you could say, would alter my decision."

The Earl turned his face aside.

"This is cruel," he said. "I have not deserved it."

"Heaven knows that I do not mean it so," replied Olimpia, quickly. "I should be more or less than woman if I did not regret the loss of such a heart as yours."

"You have not lost it, Olimpia," he replied brokenly. "You will never lose it. With me, once is always."

She clasped her hands together, like one in pain.

"Oh, that it were not so!" she exclaimed.

"Are you, then, sorry for me?"

"Bitterly — bitterly!"

"And yet you cannot love me?"

Olimpia was silent.

Again the hope flashed upon him — again he broke into passionate pleading.

"I used to think once — madly, presumptuously, if you will — that you were not quite so indifferent to me as you have been of late. Was I mistaken in so thinking? Or is it possible that I have done anything to lessen your regard? Have I ever offended you? Or pained you? Or manifested my admiration too openly?"

"Never — never."

"Then, did you never care for me? For Heaven's sake, tell me this before we part?"

Olimpia became ashy pale and leaned upon the table, as if her strength were failing her.

"Lord Castletowers," she said slowly, "you have no right to press me thus."

"Not when the happiness of my whole life is at stake? Give me but the shadow of a hope, and I will be silent!"

"I cannot."

The Earl put his hand to his forehead in a bewildered way.

"I don't seem as if I could believe it," he said. "But — if I only knew why, perhaps it would not be so hard to bear."

Miss Colonna looked down, and for some moments neither spoke nor stirred. At length she said: —

"I will tell you why, Lord Castletowers, if you *must* know. It is possible that I may never marry; but if I do, it must be to one who can do more for Italy than yourself. Are you satisfied?"

The young man could not trust himself to speak.

He only looked at her; and a dark expression came into his face — such an expression as Olimpia had never seen it wear till that moment.

"Farewell," she said, almost imploringly, and put out her hand.

"Farewell," he replied, and, having held it for a moment in his own, disengaged it gently, and said no more.

She remembered afterwards how cold her own hand was, and how dry and hot was the palm in which it rested.

But a few moments later, and she was kneeling by her bedside in her own far-away chamber, silent and self-reliant no longer, but wringing her hands with a woman's passionate sorrow, and crying aloud: —

"Oh, that he could have looked into my heart — that he could only have known how I love him!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

At Arm's Length.

THERE was no superfluous guest at Lady Castletowers' table, after all; for Miss Colonna excused herself on the plea of severe headache, and Signor Montecuculi opportunely filled her place. But the dinner proved an *effet manqué*, notwithstanding. The Earl, though, as host, he strove to do his best, played the part languidly and was bitterly sad at heart. Saxon, who had come in covered with dust and foam about five minutes before the dinner was served, looked weary and thoughtful, and all unlike his own joyous self. Giulio Colonna, full of Italian politics, was in-

disposed for conversation. And so, what with Olimpia's absence, and what with that vague sense of discomfort inseparable from any kind of parting or removal, a general dreariness pervaded the table.

Miss Hatherton, however, was lively and talkative, as usual. Finding Saxon unwontedly silent, she consoled herself with the stranger, and questioned Signor Montecuculi about Sicily and Naples, Calatafimi, Palermo, Garibaldi, and Victor Emmanuel, to her heart's content.

In the meanwhile, Colonna, sitting at Lady Castletowers' left hand, had been lamenting the non-fulfilment of certain of his plans.

"I had hoped," he said, in a low tone, "that something would have come of it ere this."

"And I had hoped it, too, dear friend — for your sake," replied Lady Castletowers, benevolently.

"I had made certain that, knowing how unexpectedly we are called away, he would have spoken to-day; but on the contrary, he ordered out his horse quite early, and has been in the saddle all day."

"That looks strange."

"Very strange. I wish to Heaven we could have remained with you one week longer."

"But it is not too late to reverse your plans."

Colonna shook his head.

"I can no more reverse them," he said, "than I can reverse the order of the planets."

"Then leave Olimpia with me. She is not fit to go up to town this evening."

"Thanks — I had already thought of that; but she is determined to accompany me."

To which the Countess, who was much more deeply

interested in procuring Miss Hatherton's fortune for her son than in securing a wealthy bridegroom for the daughter of her friend, replied, "I am sorry, *amico*," and transferred her conversation to Mr. Walkingshaw.

But Colonna had not yet played his last card. When the ladies retired, he took the vacant seat at Saxon's right hand, and said: —

"Ours is an abrupt departure, Mr. Trefalden; but I trust we shall see you in London."

Saxon bowed, and murmured something about obligation and kindness.

"You are yourself returning to town, I understand, the day after to-morrow."

Saxon believed he was.

"Then you must promise to come and see us. You will find us, for at least the next fortnight, at the Portland Hotel; but after that time we shall probably be bending our steps towards Italy."

Saxon bowed again, and passed the decanters.

Colonna began to see that there was something wrong.

"When friends wish to ensure a meeting," said he, "and we *are* friends, I trust, Mr. Trefalden — their best plan is to make some definite appointment. Will you dine with us on Thursday at our hotel?"

"I am afraid . . . . ." began Saxon.

"Nay, that is an ominous beginning."

"I have been so long away from town," continued the young man, somewhat confusedly, "and shall have so many claims upon my time for the next few weeks, that I fear I must make no engagements.

Giulio Colonna was utterly confounded. But yesterday, and this young millionnaire would have grasped

at any straw of invitation that might have brought him nearer to Olimpia; and now . . . . . Was he drawing off? Was he offended? He laid his hand on Saxon's arm, and, bending his most gracious smile upon him, said: —

"I will not part from you thus, my dear sir. Those who serve my country serve me; and you have been so munificent a benefactor to our cause that you have made me your debtor for life. I will not, therefore, suffer you to drop away into the outer ranks of mere acquaintanceship. I look upon you as a friend, and as a friend you must promise to break bread with me before I leave England."

Saxon would have given the best thoroughbred in his stables — nay, every horse that he possessed, and the mail phaeton into the bargain! — only to know at that moment how the Earl had prospered in his wooing. Being ignorant, however, on this point, he made the best reply he could, under the circumstances.

"I will dine with you, if I can, Signor Colonna," he said, bluntly. "At all events, I will call upon you at your hotel; but until I know how I am situated with — with regard to other friends — I can say nothing more positive."

"Then I suppose I must try to be content," replied the Italian, pleasantly; but he felt that Saxon Trefalden was on his guard and holding him at arm's length, and in his heart he cursed the adverse power that instinct told him was at work against him.

Later in the evening, when they were all gone and Lady Castletowers had retired, and Saxon remained the only guest in the house, the two young men went down to the smoking salon — a large, comfortable

room adjoining the library, and opening upon the same quiet garden.

"Well?" exclaimed Saxon, eagerly? "What speed?"

The Earl closed the door before replying; and then his answer was significant enough.

"None."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Trefalden, that the sooner that yacht is found and we are on the high seas, the better pleased I shall be. She has refused me."

Despite the claims of friendship and his own generous resolves, Saxon's heart gave a joyous bound.

"Refused you!" he said. "On what grounds?"

The Earl flung himself into a chair.

"On patriotic grounds," he replied, gloomily.

"Do you mean because you are English?"

"No — nor yet because she does not love me; but because if ever she gives her hand in marriage, it must be to a man who can "do more for Italy' than Gervase Wynneclyffe."

"Do more for Italy!" repeated Saxon, slowly.

"Aye — do you know what that means? Why, man, it means that Olimpia Colonna with all her beauty, purity, and pride of birth, will some day sell herself — sell herself, wrong her husband, and sacrifice me — for her country's sake! If I were as rich as you are, she would marry me. If you were to propose to her to-morrow, she would marry you. If you were old, ugly, ignorant — anything, in short, save a Bourbon or a Hapsburgh — she would probably marry you all the same. And yet she loves me!"

"Are you sure of that?"

"I am as certain of it as that she lives and breathes."

"Did — did she admit it?"

"No — but she could not deny it. Besides I saw it — I felt it. There are times when all men are clairvoyant; and I was clairvoyant then."

Saxon was silent.

"And this is patriotism!" ejaculated Castletowers, bitterly. "I have heard it said that virtues carried to excess become vices; but till now I never believed it. As for the Italian cause . . . . . I have been a true friend to it, Trefalden — a true and earnest friend, as you well know; but now — I hate it."

And he ground the words out slowly between his teeth, as if he meant them.

After this, they sat together with books and maps before them, planning many things, and talking far into the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

Going to Norway.

"We are going to Norway — Castletowers and I!"

The words were in Saxon's mouth all day long, and Saxon himself was living in a fever of preparation. The men at the Erectheum took a good deal of languid interest in his plans, and were lavish of advice in the matter of Norwegian travel — especially those who had never crossed the Skager Rack in their lives. And Saxon was grateful for it all, buying everything that everybody recommended, and stocking himself in the wildest way with meat-essences, hermetically preserved

game and fish, solid soups, ship's biscuit, wines, spirits and liqueurs, fishing-tackle, wading boots, patent tents, polyglott washing books, Swedish and Norwegian grammars, dictionaries and vocabularies, pocket telescopes, pocket microscopes, pocket revolvers, waterproof clothing, and a thousand other snares of the like nature. Then, besides all these, he ordered a couple of nautical suits, and a gorgeous log-book bound in scarlet morocco, and secured by a Chubb's lock; for Saxon had scorned to hire his yacht — he had bought it, paid for it, christened it, and now meant to play the part of captain and owner thereof, under the due jurisdiction of a competent master.

In all this, Mr. Lawrence Greatorex had made himself particularly useful and obliging, having taken the trouble to go down with Saxon to Portsmouth for the purpose of introducing him to a ship-building acquaintance who happened, luckily, to be able to help them to the very thing of which they were in search. It was an American yacht, slight and graceful as an American beauty; and as her owner was anxious to sell and Saxon was eager to buy, the bargain was soon concluded.

Then came the hiring of a competent master and crew; the shipping of Saxon's multitudinous stores; the trial trip round the Isle of Wight; and all the rest of those delightfully business-like preliminaries which make the game of yachting seem so much like earnest. And throughout the whole of this time, Mr. Greatorex — who, to do him justice, was really grateful to his benefactor, and anxious to serve him in any way not involving the repayment of a certain modest loan — posted backwards and forwards between London and

Portsmouth, helped Saxon through innumerable commercial difficulties, and proved himself an invaluable adviser.

It was a busy time for Saxon. He had no leisure for regrets, and perhaps no overwhelming inclination to indulge in them, either. What was his disappointment, after all, compared with the Earl's? A mere scratch beside a deep and deadly wound. Castletowers had loved Olimpia Colonna for four long years — Saxon had been her slave for about as many weeks. Castletowers had confessed to him, in a manly, quiet way, and without the slightest semblance of affectation, that he believed he should never love any other woman — Saxon had no such conviction; but felt, on the contrary, that the best love of his life was yet to come. All these things considered, he was so grieved for his friend that he came to be almost ashamed of his own trouble — nay, was somewhat ashamed to regard his disappointment in the light of a trouble. Olimpia had never cared for him. She had cared for nothing but his wealth; and only for that on account of Italy. Miss Hatherton was right. She had spoken only the literal truth that day when she compared him to the goose that laid the golden eggs. It was a humiliating truth; but, after all, was it not as well for the goose to have escaped with only the loss of an egg or two? So Saxon tried to be philosophic; kept his secret to himself; hurried on the yachting preparations with a will; and resolved to efface Olimpia's beautiful image from his heart as rapidly as possible.

At last all was ready. The dear little yacht rode lightly at anchor in Portsmouth harbour, only waiting for her lord and master to embark; and Saxon, having

made his last round of inspection and seen that everything was in order, from the glittering swivel-gun on the foredeck to the no less brilliant pots and pans in the caboose, was speeding up to London, to spend his last evening with William Trefalden.

"Isn't she a little beauty, Greatorex?" said he.

It was the first word that had been spoken since they left Portsmouth.

"I'll tell you what it is, my dear boy," replied the banker, with that engaging familiarity to which so many of his West-end acquaintances had the bad taste to object, "the Albula is just the tautest and trimmest little craft that ever scudded under canvas. If she had been built for you, you could not have had a better fit."

"I wonder what Castletowers will say when he sees her!"

"If he has but half the taste I give him credit for, he will endorse my verdict. Do you meet in London or Portsmouth?"

"In London; and go down together. We hope to weigh anchor about three o'clock in the afternoon."

"And you will be away — how long?"

"From two to three months."

Mr. Greatorex looked thoughtful, and lit a cigar.

"If I can be useful to you while you are out there, Trefalden, you know you may command me," said he. "I mean if you have any stocks or shares that you want looked after, or any interest got in."

"Thank you very much," replied Saxon; "but my cousin manages all those things for me."

"Humph! And you have no other lawyer?"

"Of course not."

"Would you think it impertinent if I ask how he has disposed of your property? Understand, my dear boy, that I don't want you to tell me if you had rather not; but I should like to know that Mr. Trefalden of Chancery Lane has done the best he can for you."

"Oh, you may take that for granted," said Saxon, warmly.

"We take nothing for granted, east of Temple Bar," replied Greatorex, drily.

But of this observation his companion took no notice.

"More than half my money was left in the Bank of England," said he, "in Government stock."

"Safe; but only three per cent.," remarked the banker.

"And the rest is invested in — in a Company."

"In what Company?" asked Greatorex quickly.

"Ah, that I may not tell you. It's a secret at present."

The banker looked very grave.

"I am sorry for that," he said.

"Don't be sorry. It's a magnificent enterprise — the greatest thing of the present half century, and a certain success. You'll hear all about it before long."

"Not the South Australian diamond mines, I hope?"

"No, no."

"Did Mr. Trefalden advise the investment?"

"Yes; and has put all his own money into it as well."

"That looks as if he had some faith in it."

"He has perfect faith in it. He is the Company's lawyer, you see, and knows all about it."

"And who are the directors?"

"Well, I believe I'm one of them," laughed Saxon.

"And the rest?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"But you have met them on board-days?"

"Never. I don't think there have been any board-days at present."

The banker shook his head.

"I don't like it," said he. "I tell you frankly, my dear boy, I don't like it."

"I really see no reason why you should dislike it," replied Saxon.

Mr. Greatorex smoked for some time in silence, and made no reply. After that, the conversation went back to the yacht; and then they talked about Norway, and salmon-fishing, and a thousand other topics connected with the voyage, till they shook hands at parting on the platform of the London terminus.

"I wish, upon my soul, Trefalden, that you would entrust me with the name of that Company," said the banker, earnestly.

"I cannot."

"It would enable me to keep an eye on your interests while you are away."

"You are most kind," replied Saxon; "but I have promised to keep the secret faithfully, and I mean to do so. Besides, I have absolute confidence in my cousin's discretion."

The City man shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"To tell you the blunt truth, my dear fellow," said he, "I would not trust William Trefalden one inch farther than I could see him. There — don't look at me as if I were proposing to blow up the Houses of Parliament. It is a rude thing to say, no doubt; but

I am not the only man living who is of that opinion. I don't like William Trefalden. Perhaps you will say that I have good reason to dislike him — and so I have; but that is not it. I am not speaking now from my prejudices, but through my regard for you. You did a very friendly thing by us, in spite of your cousin; and I should rejoice to do something for you in return."

"Also in spite of my cousin, I suppose," replied Saxon, half in jest, and more than half in anger. "No, I thank you, Mr. Greatorex. You mean well, I am sure; but you cannot serve me in this matter — unless by dismissing an unjust prejudice from your mind."

"Wilful man — et cætera! Well, then, Trefalden, good-bye, and bon voyage."

"Good-bye, Mr. Greatorex."

And so they parted.

CHAPTER XX.

A Dinner Tête-à-Tête.

For the first time since he had come into his fortune, Telemachus had succeeded in persuading Mentor to take dinner with him. He had invited him to gorgeous club dinners, to Richmond dinners, to Blackwall dinners, to snug tête-à-tête dinners at the St. James's-street chambers, and Mentor had systematically and inflexibly declined them, one and all. So the present was quite an eventful occasion; and Telemachus, who had become rather famous for the way in which he entertained his friends, had provided a very recherché little dinner in honour of his cousin's society.

They met at Saxon's chambers in St. James's-street. There were flowers on the table, and various kinds of wine in and out of ice on the sideboard, and a succession of the most delicate courses that the most fastidious *gourmet* could desire. These latter, being supplied by a first-rate house in the neighbourhood, kept continually arriving in cabs, so that the poet was literally right for once, and each dish came "not as a meat, but as a guest."

"Education is a wonderful thing, Saxon," said Mr. Trefalden, when the business of the meal was over, and they were amusing themselves with some peaches and a pine. "The last time you and I dined together, it was at Reichenau. You were then very much surprised because I would not let you drink Lafitte and water, and you had never tasted truffles. You called them 'nasty black things,' if I remember rightly."

"And now I can discriminate between white Hermitage and Château Yquem, and appreciate as I ought the genius of the Greeks, who made sixty-two kinds of bread!"

"I fear your newly-acquired wisdom will be of little use to you in Norway. By the way, you owe me five hundred and sixty pounds."

"What for?"

"For eight oil paintings, worth about two pounds apiece."

And then Mr. Trefalden, laughing at his cousin's astonishment, told him that he had purchased these pictures from Mrs. Rivière.

"I have called upon them twice or thrice," he said, "and each time I have freely paid away your good coin of the realm. I bought four pictures the first

time, two the second, and so forth. They seemed very poor, and very glad to get the money."

"They are not more glad than I am," said Saxon. "When did you see them last?"

"About four or five days ago. They were then just starting for Italy, and are by this time, I suppose, some way upon the road. The mother looked ill. She is not in the least like our friend Lady Castletowers."

"To what part of Italy are they gone?"

"To Nice; where I am to write to them, in case I hear of a purchaser for any more of the paintings. Shall I hear of a purchaser, or do you conceive that you have thrown away enough money for the present?"

"Find the purchaser, by all means," replied Saxon. "Five hundred and sixty pounds are soon spent."

"Out of your purse — yes; but such a sum is a little fortune in theirs."

"I want them to have a hundred a year," said Saxon.

"Which means that our imaginary connoisseur is to spend two thousand pounds. My good fellow, they would never believe it!"

"Try them. It is so easy to believe in pleasant impossibilities."

"Well, I will see what I can do; — after all, they are but women, and women are credulous."

"Don't you think her very pretty?" asked Saxon, somewhat irrelevantly.

To which Mr. Trefalden, holding his wineglass to the light, replied, with great indifference: —

"Why, no — not particularly."

"She is like a Raffaelle Madonna!" said Saxon, indignantly.

"Perhaps — but I am no admirer of Madonnas. Olimpia Colonna is ten times handsomer."

Saxon was silent. "Have you seen the Colonnas since they left Castletowers?" asked Mr. Trefalden, looking at him somewhat curiously.

"No — I have not had time to call upon them. And now tell me something about the Company."

Mr. Trefalden had a great deal to tell about the Company — about the great engineering establishment that was in course of erection at Cairo; about the surveyors who were already going over the line; about the scientific party that had started for Hit, in search of the hoped-for coal strata; about the directors who were on their way to Bagdad and Teheran; and, above all, about the wonderful returns that every shareholder might expect to receive in the course of some six or eight years more.

"If I were not bound for Norway," said Saxon, "I would have taken a trip up the Mediterranean, to inspect the works and report progress."

"It would scarcely repay you at present," replied his cousin. "A year hence there will be more to see. And now farewell to you."

Saxon saw his cousin to the door, and parted from him with reluctance. A few months back, he would have kissed him on both cheeks, as on the evening when they first met in Switzerland; but civilisation had rubbed off the bloom of his Arcadianism by this time, and he refrained.

He had scarcely returned to his room, scarcely rung for lights and seated himself at his desk with the intention of writing a few leave-taking notes, and arranging his scattered papers, when he heard a cab

dash up to the door, a hasty footstep in the ante-room, and a familiar voice asking if he were at home. The next moment Lord Castletowers was in the room.

"You here to-night!" exclaimed Saxon. "Has anything happened?"

"Only this," replied his friend. "Colonna is summoned to Palermo, and *must* go. He had intended to cross to Sicily from Genoa; but some cabal is on foot, and he has been warned that he is liable to be arrested if seen in any French or Sardinian port. Now I come to ask if *you* will take him over?"

"To Sicily?"

"Yes — round by Gibraltar. It is Colonna's only safe route; and we could steer northwards as soon as we had landed our man. Do you mind doing this?"

"Not in the least. I would as soon sail in one direction as another — nay, I had far sooner steer southward than northward, if that be all!"

"Then it is settled?"

"Quite — if Signor Colonna will meet us at Portsmouth to-morrow. But I thought you hated the cause, Castletowers, and would do no more for it!"

The Earl smiled sadly.

"One may quarrel with liberty as often as Horace with Lydia," said he; "but one can no more help coming back to her than one can help loving her."

CHAPTER XXI.

Scylla and Charybdis.

DAY by day, the "Albula," carrying the Swiss colours at her mast-head, spread her white wings and skimmed like a sea-bird over the face of the waters. The picturesque Channel Isles; the cloudy cliff of Finisterre; the rock of Gibraltar, blinding white in the glare of the mid-day sun; Mount Abyla, shadowy and stupendous, standing out from the faint line of the African coast; the far peaks of the Sierra Nevada; and the Spanish islands, green with groves of orange and citron, rose one by one out of the blue sea, glided past, and sank away again in the distance. Sometimes no land was visible on either side. Sometimes the little vessel sped along so close under the lee of the wooded headlands, that those on board could hear the chiming of the convent-bells, and the challenge of the sentinels pacing the ramparts of the sea-washed forts. But for the most part they kept well out to sea, steering direct for Sicily. And all this time the two friends mainly lived on deck, acquiring nautical knowledge, growing daily more and more intimate, and leaving Signor Colonna to fill page after page of close and crabbed manuscript in the cabin below. It was a delicious time. The days were all splendour and the nights all stars, and the travellers slept to the pleasant music of the waves.

"Lend me your glass, Trefalden," said Lord Castletowers. "I want to look at that steam frigate. I can't make out her flag."

They had been several days at sea, and were within about eighteen hours' sail of Palermo. A faint blue headland far away to the left marked the southernmost point of the island of Sardinia; while straight ahead, trailing a banner of pale smoke behind her, came the frigate that had attracted Lord Castletowers' attention.

"She seems to be coming our way," said Saxon.

"She is bearing right down upon us," replied the Earl; "and she carries guns; — I don't quite like the look of her."

"You don't think she is going to board us?"

"I do."

And Lord Castletowers went to the top of the cabin stairs and called to Colonna to come up.

"I want you just to glance at this steamer through Trefalden's glass," said he. "Will you mind giving your pen a moment's rest?"

"Not at all," replied the Italian; and came at once on deck.

His brow darkened at sight of the approaching steamer. He took the glass; adjusted the focus; looked for some ten seconds silently and steadily; and returned it with but a single word of comment.

"Neapolitan."

"But she will not dare to molest us."

Colonna looked doubtful.

"If we were sailing under the British flag," said he, "it would be different; but I fear that Naples may observe less courtesy towards the Swiss colours. In any case they have a right, under the laws of blockade, to search for contraband of war."

"Good God!" exclaimed Castletowers; "what is to be done?"

Signor Colonna hesitated a moment before replying; but when his words came, they were quick and decisive.

"If the captain *has* a motive in bearing down upon us, I am the object of his search. But he cannot be alongside for at least ten minutes. I will hide my papers at once. If Mr. Trefalden will lend me one of his pilot coats, and you will both call me Sir Thomas Wylde, I have no fear of detection. I speak English quite well enough to deceive any Neapolitan. I have done it before, in worse emergencies than this. Remember — Sir Thomas Wylde. I have a passport made out in that name, in case it is asked for."

And with this he plunged back into the cabin; hid his letters and papers; slipped on one of Saxon's blue over-coats gorgeous with anchor buttons; lit a short clay pipe; pulled his cap a little forward over his brow; lay down at full length on a sofa in the cabin; and waited patiently.

"She has signalled for us to lie to!" cried Lord Castletowers, down the cabin stairs.

"Lie to, then, by all means."

"And an officer seems to be coming on board."

"He is very welcome."

Lord Castletowers smiled, in spite of his anxiety.

"That man is as cool as an iceberg," said he to Saxon. "And yet he knows he will be swinging from the topmost tower of St. Elmo within forty-eight hours, if these people recognise him!"

And now the great frigate towered alongside the tiny yacht, frowning down with all her port-holes, and crowded with armed men.

A boat was then lowered, and two Neapolitans, a

first lieutenant and a subordinate officer, came on board.

The lieutenant was perfectly polite, and apologised for his intrusion with the best bred air in the world. He requested to know the name and destination of the yacht, the name of her owner, and the names of all persons on board.

Lord Castletowers, who assumed the office of spokesman, replied in fluent Italian. The name of the yacht was the "Albula;" she was the property of Mr. Trefalden, a Swiss gentleman, who was cruising in the Mediterranean with his friends Lord Castletowers and Sir Thomas Wylde; both British subjects. They had no object whatever in view, save their own pleasure, and could not say in what direction they might be going. Probably to Athens. Quite as probably to Constantinople or Smyrna.

The Signor Luogotenente bowed, and inquired if Milord Trefalden had any intention of landing in Sicily?

The Earl replied that Mr. Trefalden would probably put in at Marsala for fresh water.

"Milord carries no arms, no gunpowder, no munitions of war?"

"Only the brass swivel which the Signor Luogotenente perceives on deck, and its appurtenances."

The Neapolitan explained that he was under the necessity of requesting permission to glance into the hold, which was accordingly opened for his inspection. He then asked leave to see the cabin, and went down, accompanied by Trefalden and Castletowers, leaving his subordinate on deck.

"Our friend Sir Thomas Wylde," said the Earl, with an introductory wave of the hand.

Colonna, who was still lying on the sofa, with his pipe in his mouth, and an old Times supplement in his hand, lifted up his head at these words, rose lazily, made a very stiff bow, and said nothing. The Neapolitan commander returned the bow, made some pleasant remark on the "*gentilezza*" of the pretty little cabin, and again apologised for the trouble he had given.

The present insurrection, he explained, compelled his Majesty's Government to keep strict watch upon all vessels sailing towards Sicily. It was not an agreeable service for the officers of his Majesty's navy; but it was a very necessary one. He believed that he had now but one duty left to perform. He must trouble milords to hear him read a proclamation containing the description of one Giulio Colonna, a noted political offender, for whose apprehension, his Majesty, the king of the Two Sicilies, offered a reward of two thousand piastres. The said Giulio Colonna, he might add, was supposed to be even now on his way to Palermo.

He then drew a paper from his pocket-book, and, removing his hat, read aloud in the name of his sovereign a very minute and accurate inventory of Signor Colonna's outward man, describing his eyes, nose, mouth, teeth, hair, beard, moustache, height, and complexion; to all of which Signor Colonna listened with a placid composure that might have deceived Mephistophiles himself.

"What is all that about?" said he in English, when the officer had finished reading. "I do not understand Italian, you know."

Saxon could hardly forbear laughing outright while

Castletowers gravely translated the proclamation for the benefit of the supposed Sir Thomas.

Colonna smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Pshaw!" said he. "A hopeless quest. They might as well try to catch a swallow on the wing!"

Whereupon the Signor Luogotenente, understanding the tone and gesture, though not the words, drew himself up, and replied with some little assumption of dignity, that the man in question was a notorious traitor, and certain to fall into the hands of justice before long.

He then left the cabin somewhat less graciously than he had entered it, and Lord Castletowers, following him upon deck, took occasion to apologise for his friend.

"Sir Thomas is brusque," he said; "but then the English *are* brusque."

To which the Neapolitan replied by a well-turned compliment to himself, and took his leave. He then went back to his ship, followed by his sub-lieutenant; final salutations were exchanged; the steam frigate drove off with a fiery panting at her heart; and in a few minutes the strip of blue sea between the two vessels had widened to the space of half-a-mile.

"Hurra!" shouted the Earl. "Come up, Sir Thomas Wylde, and join me in three cheers for Francesco Secondo! You are safely past Scylla this time."

"And Charybdis," replied Colonna, divesting himself of Saxon's blue coat, and answering from below. "Do you know why I did not come on deck?"

"No."

"Because I caught a glimpse of that sub-lieutenant's face as he jumped on board."

"Do you know him?"

"Perfectly. His name is Galeotti. He used to profess liberalism a dozen years ago, and he was my secretary in Rome in 'forty-eight."

CHAPTER XXII.

Palermo.

A GIGANTIC curve of rippling blue sea — an irregular crescent of amber sand, like a golden scimetar laid down beside the waves — a vast area of cultivated slopes, rising terrace above terrace, plateau beyond plateau, all thick with vineyards, villas, and corn slopes — here and there a solitary convent with its slender bell-tower peeping over the tree-tops — great belts of dusky olives, and, higher still, dense coverts of chesnut and ilex — around and above all, circling in the scene from point to point, an immense amphitheatre of mountains, all verdure below, all barrenness above, whose spurs strike their roots into the voluptuous sea, and whose purple peaks stand in serrated outline against the soft blue sky.

"The bay of Palermo!"

Such was the exclamation that burst from the lips of the two younger men, as the "Albula" rounded the headland of St. Gallo about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day following their encounter with the Neapolitan frigate. Colonna, who had been waiting on deck for the last hour, silent and expectant held out his arms as if he would fain embrace the glorious panorama, and murmured something which might have been a salutation or a prayer.

"Yes, the bay of Palermo!" repeated Lord Castletowers, with enthusiasm. "The loveliest bay in Europe,

let the Neapolitan say what he will! That furthest point is Cefalu — here is the Monte Pellegrino, crowned with the shrine of Santa Rosalia — yonder, in that mountain gorge, lies Monreale; and this part which we are now passing is called the Conca d'Oro. See, there are the domes of Palermo already coming into sight!"

"And there," said Colonna, pointing to a flag flapping languidly from the battlements of a little tower close down upon the strand, "there, heaven be praised, is the tricolor of Italy!"

And now, as the yacht drew nearer, a compact forest of spires and pinnacles, glittering domes and white-fronted palaces rose, as it were, out of the bay at their approach. The sentinel on the Molo flung up his cap and shouted "Viva Garibaldi!" as they passed. The harbour swarmed with large and small craft of every description; speronaroes, feluccas, steamers, and open boats, every one of which carried the national flag conspicuous on mast or bowsprit. The quays were crowded with red shirts, Sardinian uniforms, and military priests; and close against the landing-place, under the shadow of Fort Galita, stood a large body of Garibaldians, perhaps a thousand in number, leaning on their muskets and chattering with the most undisciplined vivacity imaginable. As Saxon's tiny yacht glided in under the bows of a great ungainly English steamer, some ten or a dozen of the red shirts stepped coolly out of the ranks, and came to the verge of the quay to reconnoitre these new-comers.

At that moment, an Italian officer leaning over the side of the steamer cried: —

"Ecco il Colonna!"

The name was heard by one of the soldiers on the

quay. It flew from lip to lip; it swelled into a shout; the shout was taken up, echoed, repeated, redoubled, till the air rang with it, and the walls of the fortress gave it back again. In an instant the landing-place was surrounded; the deck of every vessel in the harbour became suddenly alive with men; and still the mighty welcome gathered voice: —

"Colonna! Colonna!"

He bared his head to their greeting; but scarcely one in each thousand could see him where he stood. Thus several seconds passed, and the shouts were growing momentarily more passionate and impatient, when a boat was pushed off from the great steamer, and a young officer came springing down the accommodation ladder.

"Honoured signore," he said, cap in hand, "his Excellency General Garibaldi is on board, and entreats that you will step on deck."

Pale with emotion, Colonna turned to Saxon and the Earl, and said: —

"Follow me."

But they would not.

"No; no," replied Castletowers. "Go up alone — it is better so. We will meet by and by."

"At the Trinacria, then?"

"Yes — at the Trinacria."

So Colonna went alone up the side of the "City of Aberdeen," and from the midst of a group of red-shirted officers upon her upper deck, there stepped forth one more bronzed and weather-beaten than the rest, who took him by both hands and welcomed him as a brother.

At this sight, the shout became a roar — windows

were thrown up and balconies thronged in all the houses round about the harbour — the troops on the quay fell back into position and presented arms — and the first of an impromptu salute of twenty-one guns was fired from Fort Galita.

The two young men looked at each other, and smiled. They had been shouting like the rest, till they were hoarse; and now, when Saxon turned to his friend, and said, "Shall we get quietly away, Castletowers, before the storm has subsided?" — the Earl caught at the idea, and proceeded at once to act upon it.

They then sheered off; moored the yacht close under the quay; beckoned to the nearest boatman; and were rowed, unnoticed, to a landing-place a little further down the harbour.

"And now, Trefalden," said Lord Castletowers, when they presently found themselves on shore, "now for a race over Palermo!"

"*Scusate*," said a pleasant voice; "but will you accept of a guide?"

It was the young officer of the "City of Aberdeen," who had followed them unseen, and overtaken them just as they landed.

In a moment they had all three shaken hands, and were chatting as joyously and freely as if they had known each other for weeks already.

"Have you ever been in Palermo before?" asked the Sicilian.

"Once, about four years ago," replied the Earl.

"Ah, Dio! it is sadly changed. You cannot see from this point what the cursed bombardment has done: but up by the Piazza Nuova the place is one heap of desolation — churches, convents, palaces, all

destroyed, and hundreds of corpses yet lying unburied in the ruins! But we mean to take our revenge at Melazzo."

"At Melazzo!" repeated Saxon. "Where is that?"

"What! Do you not know?"

"We know nothing," said Castletowers, eagerly, "nothing of what has happened since we left England. What about Melazzo?"

They had been turning their backs upon the harbour, and proceeding in the direction of the Strada Toledo; but at these words, their new friend seized them each by an arm, and hurried them back to the quay.

"You see that great steamer?" he exclaimed, pointing to the 'City of Aberdeen.' "That steamer on board of which his Excellency invited the Colonna?"

"Yes."

"And those troops drawn up against the landing-place?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, they are all picked men; the last twelve hundred of the expedition. They are now waiting to go on board, and by ten o'clock to-night will steam out of the harbour. General Cosenz and his Cacciatori are already gone — they went last evening; but Garibaldi himself goes with us in the 'City of Aberdeen.' Melazzo is not far — we shall be there before daybreak; but they say there will be no fighting till the day after to-morrow."

"Why, this is glorious!" cried Saxon.

"Yes, you are in luck to drop in for a siege the day after your arrival," replied the Sicilian. "I have been here for nearly three weeks, and have had nothing

to do yet, except to assist in the demolition of the Castello, and that was not amusing. It was all well enough for the first hour or two: but one soon gets tired of pulling down stone walls when there are no Regi behind them."

He then led the way back to the Toledo, pointing out those places where the struggle had been fiercest, asking and answering questions, and pouring forth his pleasant talk with the simple vivacity of a boy.

His name, he said, was Silvio Beni. He was the second son of a Palermitan landowner on the other side of the island, and was now serving as aide-de-camp to General Medici. He had fought last year as a volunteer at Solferino; but had no intention of becoming a soldier by profession. Fighting for liberty was one thing; but fighting for four pauls a-day was another. He meant to cultivate olives and vines, and live the pastoral life of his forefathers, if he did not happen to get shot before the end of the campaign.

Chattering thus, he led Saxon and Castletowers through the chief streets of the city; and a terrible sight it was for eyes unused to the horrors of war. Here were the remnants of the famous barricades of the 27th of May; here the shattered walls of the university, the Pretorio pitted with shot-holes, and the monastery of the Seven Angels, of which a mere shell remained. Then came a stately palace, roofless and windowless — the blackened foundations of a church once famous for its archives — a whole street propped, and threatening to fall at every moment — the massy fragments of a convent in which the helpless sisters had been burned alive beyond the possibility of escape. In some places scarcely one stone was left standing on

another. In some, the fiery storm had passed by and left no trace of its course.

Presently, from a broad space of inextricable ruin pestilent with unburied dead, they emerged upon a quarter where the streets were gay with promenaders and the cafés crowded with idlers; where the national flag floated gaily from the roofs of the public buildings, and all the butterfly business of South Italian life was going on as merrily as if the ten-inch shell were a phenomenon the very name of which was unknown to Sicilian ears.

Saxon could not comprehend how these people should be eating ices and playing at dominoes as if nothing had happened of late to disturb their equanimity. It seemed to him inexpressibly shocking and heartless; and, not being accustomed to conceal his opinions, he said so, very bluntly.

The Sicilian smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"They are so happy to be free," he replied, apologetically.

"But what right have they to be happy while their dead lie unburied at their very doors?" asked Saxon, indignantly. "What right have they to forget the hundreds of innocent women and children crushed and burned in their homes, or the Neapolitans who massacred them?"

"Ah, *gli assassini!* we will pay them out at Melazzo," was the quick reply.

And this was the Sicilian temperament. Sights which filled Saxon and the Earl with pity and horror, brought but a passing cloud upon the brow of their new acquaintance. He had seen them daily for three weeks, and grown familiar with them. He talked and

laughed in the very precincts of death; scrambled up the barricades; showed where the Regi had been repulsed, and at which point the Garibaldians had come in; chattered about the cession of Nice, the probable duration of the war, the priests, the sbirri, the foreign volunteers, and all the thousand and one topics connected with the revolutionary cause; and thought a great deal more of the coming expedition than of the past bombardment.

At length, just as they came out upon the Marina, a gun was fired from Fort Galita, and their Sicilian friend bade them a hasty farewell.

"That is our signal for assembling on board," said he. "If you reach Melazzo before the work is begun, ask for me. I may be able to do something for you. At all events, I will try."

"We won't forget that promise," replied Saxon, eagerly.

"Addio, fratelli."

And these young men, who looked forward to the coming fight as if it were a pleasure party, who were total strangers to each other one short hour ago, but who were brought into contact by accident, and into sympathy by their love of liberty, their careless courage, and their faith in a common cause, embraced and parted, literally, as brothers.

The friends then went straight to the Trinacria hotel, and, learning that Colonna had not yet arrived, turned at once towards the quay. Here they found a dense crowd assembled, and the 'City of Aberdeen' with her steam up and all the troops on board.

The people were frothing over with excitement, and so densely packed that the young men might as

reasonably have tried to elbow their way through a stone wall as through the solid human mass interposed between themselves and the landing-place. They gathered from the exclamations of those around them that the troops were drawn up on deck, and that Garibaldi was known to be in the saloon. Now and then, a shout was raised for some officer who appeared for a moment on deck; and sometimes, when nothing else was doing, a voice from the crowd would give the signal for a storm of vivas.

Presently an officer of Cacciatori with the well-known plume of cocks' feathers in his hat, came hurrying down the quay. The crowd parted right and left, as if by magic, and he passed through amid a shower of benedictions and addios.

"Do you know who that is?" asked Saxon of those around.

"No — God bless him!" said one.

"We only know that he is going to fight for us," said another.

"The Holy Virgin and all the saints have him in their keeping!" added a third.

At this moment the crowd surged suddenly back again — a great roar burst from the thousand-throated throng — a gun was fired — and the 'City of Aberdeen' was under way!

In another second the mass had wavered, parted, turned like a mighty tide, and begun flowing out through the Porta Felice, and following the course of the steamer along the Marina Promenade. The soldiers on board stood motionless, with their hands to the sides of their hats, saluting the crowd. The crowd raced tumultuously along the shore, weeping, raving,

clapping its hands for the soldiers, and shouting "Viva Garibaldi! Viva la Liberta!" One woman fell on her knees upon the quay, with her little infant in her arms, and prayed aloud for the liberators.

Saxon and the Earl stood still, side by side, looking after the lessening steamer, and listening to the shouts which grew momentarily fainter and more distant.

"Merciful powers!" said Castletowers, "what a terrific thing human emotion is, when one sees it on such a scale as this! I should like to have seen this people demolishing the Castello."

Saxon drew a deep breath before replying, and when he spoke, his words were no answer to the Earl's remark.

"I tell you what it is, Castletowers," he said; "I feel as if we had no business to remain here another hour. For God's sake, let us buy a couple of red shirts, and be after the rest as fast as the little 'Albula' can get us through the water!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mr. Forsyth.

Mr. Trefalden was, undeniably, a very gentlemanly man. His manners were courteous; his exterior was prepossessing; and there was an air of quiet self-possession about all that he said and did which made his society very agreeable. He talked well about what he had read and seen, and knew how to turn his knowledge of men and manners, literature and art, to the best account. At the same time there was nothing

of the brilliant *raconteur* about him. He never talked in epigrams, nor indulged in flashes of sarcasm, nor condescended to make puns, like many men whose abilities were inferior to his own; but there was, nevertheless, a vein of subdued pleasantry running through his conversation which, although it was not wit, resembled wit very closely.

Most people liked him; and it was a noticeable fact that, amid the wide circle of his business acquaintances, the best bred people were those whose disposition towards him was the most friendly. Lord Castletowers thought very highly of him. Viscount Esher, whose legal affairs he had transacted for the last ten years, was accustomed to speak of him in terms which were particularly flattering upon the lips of that stately gentleman of the old school. The Duke of Doncaster, the Earl of Ipswich, and other noblemen of equal standing, looked upon him as quite a model attorney. Even Lady Castletowers approved of William Trefalden to a degree that was almost cordial, and made a point of receiving him very graciously whenever he went down into Surrey.

By mere men of business — such men, for instance, as Laurence Greatorex — he was less favourably regarded. They could not appreciate his manner. So far, indeed, from appreciating it, his manner was precisely the one thing they most of all disliked and mistrusted. They could never read his thoughts nor guess at his cards, nor gain the smallest insight into his opinions and character. They acknowledged that he was clever; but qualified the admission by adding that he was "too clever by half." In short, William

Trefalden's popularity lay, for the most part, to the west of Temple Bar.

Gifted, then, with a manner which was in itself a passport to good society, it was not surprising that the lawyer made a favourable impression upon the ladies in Brudenell Terrace. It suited him to call himself by some name not his own, and he chose that of Forsyth; so they knew him as Mr. Forsyth, and that was all. Resolved, however, to win their confidence, he spared no pains, and hesitated before no means whereby to attain his object. He traded unscrupulously on their love for the husband and father whom they had lost; and, skilfully following up his first lead, he made more way in their regard by professing to have known Edgar Rivière in the days of his youth, than by lavishing Saxon's hundreds on the worthless pictures which had served to open to him the doors of their home.

And this admirable idea had been wholly unpremeditated. It came to him like a flash of inspiration; and as an inspiration he welcomed it, acted upon it, developed it with the tact of a master. Careful not to overact the part, he spoke of the painter as of one whom he would have desired to know more intimately had he continued to reside in England, whose appearance interested him, and whose early gifts had awakened his admiration. He evinced an eager but respectful desire to glean every detail of his after-career. He bought up the whole dreary stock of Nymphs and Dryads with assiduous liberality, carrying away one or more on the occasion of every visit. Nothing was too large, too small, or too sketchy for him.

An acquaintance conducted in this fashion was not difficult of cultivation. The munificent and courteous

patron soon glided into the sympathetic adviser and friend. Frequent calls, prolonged conversations, unobtrusive attentions, produced their inevitable effect; and before many weeks had gone by, the widow and orphan believed in William Trefalden as if he were an oracle. Their gratitude was as unbounded as their faith. Strange to English life, ignorant of the world, poor and in trouble, they stood terribly in need of a friend; and, having found one, accepted his opinions and followed his advice implicitly. Thus it came to pass that the lawyer established himself upon precisely that footing which was most favourable to his designs, and became not only the confidant of all their plans, but the skilful arbiter of all their actions. Thus, also, it came to pass that at the very time when Saxon Trefalden believed them to be already dwelling upon the shores of the Mediterranean, Mrs. and Miss Rivière were still in England, and temporarily settled in very pleasant apartments in the neighbourhood of Sydenham.

Hither their devoted friend came frequently to call upon them; and it so happened that he paid them a visit on the evening of the very day that Saxon set sail for Sicily.

He went down to Sydenham in an extremely pleasant frame of mind. Ignorant of their sudden change of plans, he still believed that his cousin and the Earl were on their way to Norway; and it was a belief from which he derived considerable satisfaction. It fell in charmingly with his present arrangements; and those arrangements were now so carefully matured, and so thoroughly *en train*, that it seemed impossible they should fail of success in any particular. Perhaps, had

he known how the little Albula was even then gliding before the wind in the direction of the Channel Islands instead of tacking painfully about in the straits of Dover, Mr. Trefalden would scarcely have arrived at Mrs. Rivière's apartments in so complacent a mood.

It was delightful to be welcomed as he was welcomed. It was delightful to see the book and the embroidery laid aside as he came in — to meet such looks of confidence and gladness — to be listened to when he spoke, as if all his words were wisdom — to sit by the open window, breathing the perfume of the flowers, listening to Helen's gentle voice, and dreaming delicious dreams of days to come. For William Trefalden was more than ever in love — more than ever resolved to compass the future that he had set before him.

"We thought we should see you this evening, Mr. Forsyth," said Mrs. Rivière, when the first greetings had been exchanged. "We were saying so but a few moments before you came to the gate."

"A Londoner is glad to escape from the smoke of the town on such a delicious evening," replied Mr. Trefalden, "even though it be at the risk of intruding too often upon his suburban friends."

"Can the only friend we have in England come too often?"

"Much as I may wish it not to be so, I fear the case is not quite an impossible one."

"Mamma has been out to-day in a Bath-chair, Mr. Forsyth," said Helen. "Do you not think she is looking better?"

"I am quite sure of it," replied the lawyer.

"I feel better," said the invalid. "I feel that I gain strength daily."

"That is well."

"And Dr. Fisher says that I am improving."

"I attach more value, my dear madam, to your own testimony on that point, than to the opinion of any physician, however skilful," observed Mr. Trefalden.

"I have great faith in Doctor Fisher," said Mrs. Rivière.

"And I have great faith in this pure Sydenham air. I cannot tell you how rejoiced I am that you consented to remove from Camberwell."

Mrs. Rivière sighed.

"Do you not think I might soon go back to Italy?" she asked.

"It is the very subject which I have chiefly come down this evening to discuss," replied the lawyer.

The lady's pale face lighted up at this reply.

"I am so anxious to go," she said, eagerly. "I feel as if there were life for me in Italy."

"The question is, my dear madam, whether you are strong enough to encounter the fatigue of so long a journey."

"I am sure that mamma is not nearly strong enough," said Miss Rivière, quickly.

"I might travel slowly."

"To travel slowly is not enough," said Mr. Trefalden. "You should travel without anxiety — I mean, you should be accompanied by some person who could make all the rough places smooth and all the crooked paths straight for you, throughout the journey."

"I should be unwilling to incur the expense of

employing a courier, if I could possibly avoid it," said Mrs. Rivière.

"No doubt; for a courier is not only a costly, but a very anomalous and disagreeable incumbrance. He is both your servant and your master. Might it not, however, be possible for you to join a party travelling towards the same point?"

"You forget that we know no one in this country."

"Nay, those things are frequently arranged, even between strangers."

"Besides, who would care to be burdened with two helpless women? No stranger would accept the responsibility."

Mr. Trefalden paused a moment before replying.

"Given an equally suitable climate," he said, "I presume you are not absolutely wedded to Italy as a place of residence?"

"I love it better than any other country in the world."

"Yet I think I have heard you say that you are not acquainted with the southern coast?"

"True; we always lived in Florence."

"Then neither Mentone nor Nice would possess any charm of association for you?"

"Only the association of language and climate."

"And of these two conditions, that of climate can alone be pronounced essential; but I should say that you might make a more favourable choice than either. Has it never occurred to you that the air of Egypt or Madeira might be worth a trial, if only for one winter?"

"Mamma has been advised to try both," said Miss Rivière.

"But I prefer Italy," said the invalid; "the happiest years of my life were spent under an Italian sky."

"Pardon me; but should you, my dear madam, allow yourself to be influenced by preference in such a case as this?" asked Mr. Trefalden, very deferentially.

"I can offer a better reason, then — poverty. It is possible to live in Italy for very, very little, when one knows the people and the country so well as we know them; but I could not afford to live in Madeira or Egypt."

"The journey to Madeira is easy, and not very expensive," said Mr. Trefalden.

Mrs. Rivière shook her head.

"I should not dare to undertake it," she replied.

"Not with a careful escort?"

"Nay, if even that were my only difficulty, where should I find one?"

"In myself."

The mother and daughter looked up with surprise.

"In you, Mr. Forsyth?" they exclaimed, simultaneously.

Mr. Trefalden smiled.

"You need not let that astonish you," he said; "it is my intention to spend all my future winters abroad, and I am greatly tempted by much that I have heard and read lately about Madeira. I am a free man, however, and if Mrs. Rivière preferred to venture upon Egypt, I would quite willingly exchange Funchal for the Nile."

"This is too much goodness."

"And, if you will not think that I take an unwarrantable liberty in saying so, I may add that the question of expense must not be allowed to enter into your calculations."

"But . . ."

"One moment, my dear madam," interrupted the lawyer. "Pray do not suppose that I am presuming to offer you pecuniary assistance. Nothing of the kind. I am simply offering to advance you whatever sums you may require upon the remainder of Mr. Rivière's paintings and sketches; or, if you prefer it, I will at once purchase them from you."

"In order that I may have the means of going to Madeira?" said Mrs. Rivière, colouring painfully. "No, my kind friend; I begin to understand you now. It cannot be."

"I fear you are beginning only to misunderstand me," replied Mr. Trefalden, with grave earnestness. "If you were even right — if I were only endeavouring to assist the widow of one whose memory and genius I deeply revere, I do not think you ought to feel wounded by the motive; but I give you my word of honour that such is not my prevailing reason."

"Do you mean that you really wish to possess . . . . ."

"Every picture from which you are willing to part."

"But you would then have from twenty-five to thirty paintings from the same brush — many of them quite large subjects?"

"So much the better."

"Yet, it seems inconceivable that . . . ."

"That I should desire to make a Rivière collection? Such, nevertheless, is my ambition."

"Then you must have a spacious gallery?"

Mr. Trefalden shook his head.

"I have no gallery," he said, "at present. Some day, perhaps, if I ever fulfil a long-cherished dream, I may settle abroad, and build a house and gallery in some beautiful spot; but that is only a project, and the destinies of projects are uncertain."

He glanced at Miss Rivière as he said this, and seemed to suppress a sigh. She was looking away at the moment; but her mother saw the glance, and Mr. Trefalden intended that she should see it.

"In the meanwhile," he added, after a pause, "I am not sure that I shall be so selfish as to hoard these pictures. The world has never yet recognised Edgar Rivière; and it would be only an act of justice on my part if I were to do something which should at once secure to his works their proper position in the history of English art."

"What can you do? What do you mean?" faltered Mrs. Rivière.

"I scarcely know yet. I thought at one time that it would be well to exhibit them in some good room; but that plan might have its disadvantages. The most direct course would be, I suppose, to present them to the nation."

The mother and daughter looked at each other in speechless emotion. Their eyes were full of tears, and their hearts of gratitude and wonder.

"But, in any case," continued Mr. Trefalden, "the pictures need cleaning and framing. Nothing could be

done with them before next year, and they must be mine before even that progress can be made."

"They are yours from this moment, most generous friend and benefactor," sobbed the widow. "Oh, that he could have lived to see this day!"

But Mr. Trefalden would not suffer the ladies to express their thanks. He was proud to be regarded by them as a friend, and still more proud to be the humble instrument by means of which a great name might be rescued from undeserved obscurity; but he protested against being styled their benefactor. He then adverted, with much delicacy, to the question of price, stated that he should at once pay in a certain sum at a certain bank, to Mrs. Rivière's credit; touched again upon the subject of Madeira; and, having of course carried his point, rose, by-and-by, to take his leave.

"Then, my dear madam, I am to have the honour of escorting you to Funchal in the course of some three weeks from the present time?" he said at parting.

"If Mr. Forsyth will consent to be so burdened."

"I think myself very happy in being permitted to accompany you," replied Mr. Trefalden; "and if I have named too early a date . . ."

"Nay, a day hence would scarcely be too soon for me," said Mrs. Rivière; "my heart aches for the sunny south."

To which the lawyer replied by a courteous assurance that his own arrangements should be hastened as much as possible, and took his departure.

"Mr. Forsyth has quite what our aunt, old Lady Glastonbury, used to call the 'grand air,'" said Mrs. Rivière, as Mr. Trefalden took off his hat to them at the gate. "And he is handsome."

"I do not think him handsome," replied her daughter; "but he is the most liberal of men."

"Munificently liberal. He must be rich, and I am sure he is very good. Let me see, there was a Forsyth, I think, who married a daughter of Lord Ingleborough in the same year that Alethea became Lady Castletowers. I should like to ask whether he belongs to that family."

"Nay, darling, why put the question? Our Mr. Forsyth may come of some humbler stock and then . . . . ."

"You are right, Helen; and he can afford to dispense with mere nobility. Do you know, my child, I have sometimes thought of late —"

"What have you thought, my own dear mother?"

"That he — that Mr. Forsyth is inclined to admire my little Helen very much."

The young girl drew back suddenly, and the smile vanished from her lips.

"Oh, mamma," she said, "I hope not."

"Why so, my child? Mr. Forsyth is rich, kind, good, and a gentleman. His wife would be a very happy woman."

"But I do not love him."

"Of course you do not love him. We do not even know whether he loves you; but the time may come . . . . ."

"Heaven forbid it!" said Miss Rivière, in a low voice.

"And I say, Heaven grant it," rejoined her mother, earnestly. "I would die to-morrow, thankfully, if I but knew that my child would not be left alone in the wide world when I was gone."

The girl flung her arms passionately round her mother's neck, and burst into tears.

"Hush, hush!" she cried, "not a word of death, my darling. You must live for me. Oh, how glad — how glad I am that you are going to Madeira!"

The invalid shook her head, and leaned back wearily.

"Ah," she sighed again, "I had rather have gone to Italy."

CHAPTER XXIV.

At Sea.

Olimpia had said truly when she averred that Lord Castletowers was the only volunteer whom her father would refuse to enlist on any terms. When the young men met him presently at the door of the Trinacria, and he learned that they were about to follow the troops to Melazzo, he used every argument to turn them from the project.

"Think of Lady Castletowers," he said. "Remember how she disapproves of the cause."

"It is a cause which for the last seven years I have pledged myself to serve," replied the Earl.

"But you never pledged yourself to serve it in the field!"

"Because I never intended (through respect for my mother's prejudices) to place myself in a position that should leave me no alternative. I had not the remotest intention of coming here three weeks ago. If Montecuculi, or Vaughan, or yourself had urged me to take up arms for Sicily, I should have refused. But cir-

cumstances have brought me here; and having set my foot upon the soil, I mean to do my duty."

"It is a false view of duty," said Colonna. "You are peculiarly situated, and you have no right to act thus."

"You must blame fate — not me," replied the Earl.

"And you, Mr. Trefalden, have you asked yourself whether your adopted father would approve of this expedition?"

"My adopted father is a man of peace," replied Saxon, "and he loves me as he loves nothing else on earth; but he would sooner send me to my death than urge me to behave like a coward."

"God forbid that I should urge any man to do that," said Colonna, earnestly. "If the enemies' guns were drawn up before these windows, I would not counsel you to turn away from them; but I do counsel you not to go fifty miles hence in search of them."

"It is just as disgraceful to turn one's back upon them at fifty miles' distance as at fifty yards'," said Saxon, who happened just then to be thinking of Miss Hatherton's hint about the goose and the golden eggs.

"But you were going to Norway," persisted Signor Colonna. "You only came out of your way to set me down in this place, and, having set me down, why not follow out your former plans?"

"Shall I tell you why, *caro amico?*" said the Earl, gaily. "Because we are young — because we love adventure and danger — and, above all, because we smell gunpowder! There — it is of no use to try discussion. We are a couple of obstinate fellows, and our minds are made up."

And Colonna, seeing that they were made up, wisely said no more.

General Sirtori had been made Pro-Dictator during the absence of Garibaldi; and Colonna, though he declined any recognised ministerial office, remained at Palermo to lead the revolutionary cabinet, and supply, as he had been supplying for the last five-and-twenty years, the brains of his party. So the young men bade him farewell and set sail that evening at about eleven o'clock, taking with them a Palermitan pilot who knew the coast.

It was a glorious night, warm and cloudless, and lighted by a moon as golden and gorgeous as that beneath which the Grecian host sat by their watch-fires, "on the pass of war." A light but steady breeze filled the sails of the Albula, and crested every little wave with silver foam. To the left lay the open sea—to the right, the mountainous coast-line, dark and indefinite, with here and there a sparkling cluster of distant lights marking the site of some town beside the sea. By-and-by, as they left Palermo farther and farther behind, a vast, mysterious, majestic mass rose gradually above the seaward peaks, absorbing, as it were, all the lesser heights, and lifting the pale profile of a snowy summit against the dark blue of the sky. This was Etna.

The young men passed the night on deck. Unconscious of fatigue, they paced to and fro in the moonlight, and talked of things which they had that day seen, and of the stirring times to come. Then, as the profound beauty and stillness of the scene brought closer confidence and graver thoughts, their conversation flowed into deeper channels, and they spoke of

life, and love, and death, and that Hope that takes away the victory of the grave.

"And yet," said Saxon, in reply to some observation of his friend's, "life is worth having, if only for life's sake. Merely to look upon the sun and feel its warmth — to breathe the morning air — to see the stars at night — to listen to the falling of the avalanches, or the sighing of the wind in the pine forests, are enjoyments and privileges beyond all price. When I hear a man say that he does not care how soon he walks out of the sunshine into his grave, I look at him to see whether he has eyes that see and ears that hear like my own."

"And supposing that he is neither blind nor deaf, yet still persists — what then?"

"Then I conclude that he is deceiving himself, or me — perhaps, both."

"Why not put a more charitable construction upon it, and say that he is mad?" laughed the Earl. "Ah, Saxon, my dear fellow, you talk as one who has never known sorrow. The love of nature is a fine taste — especially when one has youth, friends, and hope, to help one in the cultivation of it; but when youth is past and the friends of youth are gone, I am afraid the love of nature is not alone sufficient to make the fag-end of life particularly well worth having. The sunshine is a pleasant thing enough, and the wind makes a grand sort of natural music among the pines; but you may depend that a time will come when the long lost light of a certain pair of eyes, and 'the sound of a voice that is still,' will be more to you than either."

"I have never denied that," replied Saxon. "I only maintain that life is such a glorious gift, and its

privileges are so abundant, that it ought never to seem wholly valueless to any reasoning being."

"That depends on what the reasoning being has left to live for," said the Earl.

"He has life to live for — life, thought, science, the glories of the material world, the good of his fellow men."

"The man who lives for his fellow men, and the man who lives for science, must both begin early," replied the Earl. "You cannot take up either philanthropy or science as a *pis-aller*. And as for the glories of the material world, my friend, they make a splendid *mise en scène;* but what is the *mise en scène* without the drama?"

"By the drama, you mean, I suppose, the human interests of life?"

"Precisely. I mean that without love, and effort, and hope, and, it may be, a spice of hatred, all the avalanches and pine woods upon earth would fail to make the burthen of life tolerable to any man with a human heart in his body. Your first sorrow will teach you this lesson — or your first illness. For myself, I frankly confess that I enjoy, and therefore prize, life less than I did when . . . when I believed that I had more to hope from the future."

"I am sorry for it," said Saxon. "For my own part, I should not like to believe that any Neapolitan bullet had its appointed billet in my heart to-morrow."

"And yet you risk it."

"That's just the excitement of the thing. Fighting is like gambling. No man gambles in the hope of losing, and no man fights in the hope of being killed; but where would be the pleasure of either gambling

or fighting, if one placed no kind of value on the stakes?"

The Earl smiled, and made no reply. Presently Saxon spoke again.

"But I say, Castletowers, a fellow might get killed, you know; mightn't he?"

"If the castle of Melazzo is half so strong a place as I have heard it is, I think a good many fellows will get killed," was the reply.

"Then — then it's my opinion . . . ."

"That the stakes are too precious to be risked?"

"By Jove, no! but that I ought to have made my will."

"You have never made one?"

"Never; and, you see, I have so much money that I ought to do something useful with it, in case of anything going wrong. Don't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Can you help me to write it?"

"I, my dear boy? Not for the world. I should be only sowing the seeds of a fine Chancery suit, if I did. Wait till we reach Melazzo — there are plenty of lawyers in Garibaldi's army."

"I shall leave some of it to you, Castletowers," said Saxon.

"Oh king, live for ever! I want neither thy money nor thy life."

Saxon looked at his friend, and his thoughts again reverted to the words that he had heard in his cousin's office on the day when he first made acquaintance with Signor Nazzari of Austin Friars.

"Can you give me any idea of what a mortgage is?" he asked, presently.

"No one better," replied the Earl, bitterly. "A mortgage is the poison which a dying man leaves in the cup of his successor. A mortgage is an iron collar which, while he wears it, makes a slave of a free-born man, and when he earns the right to take it off, leaves him a beggar."

"You speak strongly."

"I speak from hard experience. A mortgage has left me poor for life; and you know what my poverty has cost me."

"But if means could be taken to pay that mortgage off . . . ."

"It is paid off," interrupted Lord Castletowers. "Every penny of it."

"Would you mind telling me how much it was?" asked Saxon hesitatingly.

"Not at all. It was a very large sum for me, though it may not sound like a very large sum to you. Twenty-five thousand pounds."

Saxon uttered a half-suppressed exclamation.

"Will you let me ask one more question?" he said. "Did you owe this money to a man named Behrens?"

"How do you know that?"

"Never mind — only tell me."

"Yes. To Oliver Behrens — a London man — the same who bought that outlying corner of our dear old park, and — confound him! — had the insolence to build a modern villa on it."

"And you have really paid him?"

"Of course I have paid him."

"How long ago?"

"Two years ago, at the least. Perhaps longer."

Saxon was silent. A doubt — a dark and terrible doubt that had never been wholly banished — started up again in his mind, and assumed for the first time distinct and definite proportions.

"And now, having answered all your questions by the book, I shall expect you to answer mine," said Lord Castletowers.

"Pray do not ask me any," said Saxon, hurriedly.

"But I must do so. I must know where you heard of Oliver Behrens, and how you came to know that he was my father's mortgagee. Did Mr. Trefalden tell you?"

Saxon shook his head.

"And this is not the first time that you have asked me whether I am in debt," urged the Earl. "I remember once before — that day, you know, at home, when Montecuculi came — you seemed to think I had some money trouble on my mind. Surely it cannot be Mr. Trefalden who has given you this impression?"

"No — indeed, no."

"Because he knows my affairs better than I know them myself."

"He has never spoken to me of your affairs, Castletowers — never," said Saxon, earnestly.

"Then who else has been doing so? Not Vaughan? Not Colonna?"

But Saxon entreated his friend not to urge any more questions upon him, and with this request, after one or two ineffectual remonstrances, the Earl complied.

And now it was already dawning day. The moon had paled and sunk long since, and the great mountain towered, ghost-like, with its crown of own and smoke,

high up against, the cold grey of the sky. Presently the light in the east grew brighter and wider, and a strange, glorious colour — a colour compounded, as it were, of rose and gold — flushed suddenly over the snow-fields of Etna. For a moment the grand summit seemed to hang as if suspended in the air, glowing and transfigured, like the face of the lawgiver to whom the Lord had spoken as a man speaketh unto his friend. Then, almost as suddenly as it had come there, the glory faded off, and left only the pure sunshine in its place. At the same moment, the mists along the coast began to rise in long vaporous lines about the sides of the mountain; and, by-and-by, as they drifted slowly away to the leeward, a long rocky promontory that looked like an island, but was, in fact, connected with the mainland by a sandy flat, became dimly visible far away at sea.

"*Ecco, signore — ecco la rocca di Melazzo!*" said the Palermitan pilot.

But this announcement, which would have raised Saxon's pulse to fever heat half an hour before, now scarcely quickened the beating of his heart by a single throb. He was thinking of William Trefalden; vainly regretting the promise by which he had bound himself to repeat no word of Mr. Behrens' conversation; and enduring in silence the first shock of that vague and terrible mistrust which had now struck root in his mind, hereafter to flourish and bear bitter fruit.

CHAPTER XXV.

Head-Quarters.

The promontory of Melazzo reaches out about four miles into the sea, curving round to the westward at its farthest point, so as to form a little bay, and terminating in a lighthouse. Consisting as it does of a chain of rocks varying from a mile to a quarter of a mile in breadth, and rising in places to a height of seven hundred feet, it looks almost like some sleeping sea-monster heaving its huge bulk half above the waters. Towards the mainland these rocks end abruptly over against the little isthmus on which the town is built; and upon their lower terraces, frowning over the streets below and protected by the higher cliffs beyond, the castle stands, commanding land and sea. It is a composite structure enough, consisting of an ancient Norman tower and a whole world of outlying fortifications. French, English, and Neapolitans have strengthened and extended the walls from time to time, till much of the old town, and even the cathedral, has come to be enclosed withing their rambling precincts. In the year eighteen hundred and sixty this castle of Melazzo mounted forty guns of heavy calibre; so that the fanciful spectator, if he had begun by comparing the promontory to a sea monster, might well have pursued his comparison a step farther, by likening the castle to its head, and the bristling bastions to its dangerous jaws.

On the flat below, looking westward towards Termini, and eastward towards Messina, with its pier, its

promenade, and those indispensable gates, without which no Italian town could possibly be deemed complete, stands modern Melazzo — a substantial, well-built place, washed on both sides by the sea. Immediately beyond the town gates, reaching up to the spurs of the inland mountains, which here approach the shore, opens out a broad angle of level country, some six miles in width by three in depth. It is traversed by a few roads, and dotted over with three or four tiny hamlets. Here and there a detached farmhouse or neglected villa lifts its flat roof above the vineyards and olive groves which cover every foot of available ground between the mountains and the sea. Divided by broad belts of cane-brake, and intersected by ditches and watercourses, these plantations alone form a wide outlying series of natural defences.

Such is the topography of Melazzo, where Garibaldi fought the hardest and best contested battle of his famous Neapolitan campaign.

Having anchored the little Albula in a narrow creek well out of sight and reach of the Neapolitan guns, Saxon and Castletowers shouldered their rifles and made their way to Meri, a village about a couple of miles inland, built up against the slopes of the mountains, and cut off from the plain by a broad watercourse with a high stone wall on either side. It was in this village that General Medici had taken up his position while awaiting reinforcements from Palermo; and here the new comers found assembled the main body of the Garibaldian army.

The "City of Aberdeen" had arrived some hours before the Albula, and flooded the place with red-shirts. There were horses and mules feeding on trusses

of hay thrown down in the middle of the narrow streets; groups of volunteers cleaning their rifles, eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping; others hastily piling up a barricade at the farther end of the village; and some hard at work with mattrasses and sandbags protecting the upper windows of those houses that looked towards Melazzo. A strange medley of languages met the ear in every direction. Here stood a knot of Hungarians, there a group of French, a little farther on a company of raw Polish recruits, undergoing a very necessary course of drill. All was life, movement, expectation. The little hamlet rang with the tramp of men and the rattle of arms, and the very air seemed astir with the promise of war.

Arrived in the midst of this busy scene, the friends came to a halt, and consulted as to what they should do next. At the same moment a couple of officers in the English military undress came by, laden with provisions. They carried between them a huge stone bottle in a wicker coat with handles — one of those ill formed, plethoric, modern amphoræ, holding about six gallons, in which the Italian wine-seller delights to store his thin vintages of Trani and Scylla — and besides this divided burden, one was laden with black bread, and the other with a couple of hens captured and slaughtered but a few minutes before.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the owner of the hens, "Castletowers and Trefalden!"

It was Major Vaughan.

They shook hands cordially, and he invited them to accompany him to his quarters.

"I am capitally lodged," he said, "at the top of a house down yonder. We have been foraging, you see,

and can give you a splendid supper. You can pluck a fowl, I suppose, upon occasion?"

"I will do my best," laughed the Earl; "but I fear your poultry is no longer in the bloom of youth."

"If for ten days you had eaten nothing but green figs, with an occasional scrap of black bread or sea-biscuit, you would be superior to all such prejudices," replied the dragoon. "Now it is my opinion that age cannot wither the oldest hen that ever laid an egg. Do you see that man on the roof of yonder high house beyond the vineyard? That is Garibaldi. He has been up there all day, surveying the ground. We shall have some real work to do to-morrow."

"Then you think there will be a battle to-morrow!" said Saxon, eagerly.

"No doubt of it — and Bosco is about the only good general the Neapolitans have. He is a thorough soldier, and his troops are all picked men, well up to fighting."

"If you command a corps, I hope you will take us in," said the Earl.

"I do not command a corps — I am on the staff; that is to say, I do anything that is useful, and am not particular. This morning I was a drill-sergeant — yesterday, when Bosco tried to dislodge our outposts at Corriola, I took a turn at the guns. To-morrow, perhaps, if we get in among that confounded cane-brake down yonder, I may take an axe, and do a little pioneering. We are soldiers of all-work here, as you will soon find out for yourselves."

"At all events you must give us something to do."

The dragoon shrugged his shoulders. "You will

find plenty to do," said he, "when the time comes. It is too late now to enrol you in any special regiment for to-morrow's work. But we will talk of this after supper. In the meanwhile, here are my quarters."

So they followed him, and helped not only to pluck but to cook the hens, and afterwards to eat them; though the last was, perhaps, the most difficult task of the three; and after supper, having seen General Cosenz inspect a thousand of the troops, they went round with Vaughan and visited the outposts. When at length they got back to Meri it was past ten o'clock, and the same glorious moon that had lighted them on their way the night before shone down alike upon castle and sea, vineyard and village, friend and foe, wakeful patrol and sleeping soldier.

CHAPTER XXVI.

How the Battle began at Melazzo.

THE bugle sounded before dawn, and in the first grey of the morning Meri was alive with soldiers. There had been no absolute stillness, as of universal rest, all the night through; but now there was a great wakefulness about the place — a strange kind of subdued tumult, that had in it something very solemn and exciting.

By five the whole Garibaldian body was under arms. The village street, the space about the fountain, the open slopes between the houses and the torrent of Santa Lucia, and part of the main road beyond, were literally packed with men. Of these the Cacciatori, bronzed with old campaigns and wearing each his

glossy plume of cocks' feathers, looked the most soldierly. For the rest of the troops, the scarlet shirt was their only bond of uniformity, and but for the resolute way in which they handled their arms, and the steady composure of their faces, many a well-trained soldier might have been disposed to smile at their incongruous appearance. There was that about the men, however, at which neither friend nor foe could afford to make merry.

"How many do you number altogether?" asked Saxon, as they passed along the lines to the little piazza, Major Vaughan leading his horse, and the two others following.

"Taken, *en masse*, Cacciatori, Tuscan, Piedmontese, and foreign volunteers, about four thousand four hundred fighting men."

"No more?"

"Oh yes, about two thousand more," replied the dragoon, "if you count the Sicilian squadri — but they are only shouting men. Look — here comes Garibaldi!"

A prolonged murmur that swelled into a cheer, ran from line to line as the Dictator rode slowly into the piazza with his staff. He was smoking a little paper cigarette, and looked exactly like his portraits, placid, good-humoured, and weather-beaten, with his gold chain festooned across the breast of his red shirt, and a black silk handkerchief knotted loosely round his neck.

"That is Medici at his right hand," said Vaughan, springing into the saddle; "and the one now speaking to him is Colonel Dunn. Now the best thing you two fellows can do will be to keep with the main body, and as near the staff as you can. You will then see whatever is best worth seeing, and have the chance of

using your rifles as well. By Jove, Malenchini has his orders, and is moving off already."

As he spoke the words, the Tuscan general marched by at the head of his battalion, taking the westward road towards Santa Marina, where the Neapolitans had an outpost by the sea.

"One word more," said the dragoon, hurriedly. "If I fall, I should wish Miss Colonna to have Gulnare. She always liked the little Arab, and would be kind to her. Will either of you remember that for me?"

"Both — both!" replied Saxon and the Earl, in one breath.

"Thanks — and now fare you well. I don't suppose we shall find ourselves within speaking distance again for the next five hours."

With this he waved his hand, dashed across the piazza, and fell in with the rest of the staff. At the same moment General Cosenz, having orders to conduct the attack upon the Neapolitan left at Archi, rode off to take the command of his veterans; while Fabrizi and his Sicilians — a mere boyish impulsive rabble, of whom no leader could predict half an hour beforehand whether they would fight like demons, or run away like children — bore off to the extreme right, to intercept any Neapolitan reinforcements that might be advancing from Messina. Finally, when right and left were both *en route*, the main columns under Medici, were set in motion, and began defiling in excellent order along the St. Pietro road, leaving Colonel Dunn's regiment to form the reserve.

Following Vaughan's advice, the two young men shouldered their rifles, and marched with the centre.

It was now about six o'clock. The sun was already gaining power; but a fresh wind was blowing from the sea, and the vines on either side of the road were bright with dew. As they passed over the little bridge beyond the village, and looked down upon the flats below, they could see Malenchini's division winding along to the left, and Cosenz's men rapidly disappearing to the right. Then their own road sloped suddenly downward, and they saw only a continuous stream of scarlet shirts and gleaming rifles. On it rolled, to the measured, heavy, hundredfold tramp of resolute feet, never ceasing, never pausing, with only the waving cane-brake on either side, and the blue sky overhead.

In the meanwhile the enemy's forces were known to be drawn up in a great semicircle about half way between Meri and Melazzo, reaching as far as Archi to the right, and down to the seashore beyond Marina to the left. But not a man was visible. Completely hidden by the cane-brake and the vines, favoured by the flatness of the ground, prepared to fall back upon the town if necessary, and, if driven from the town to take refuge in the castle, they occupied a position little short of impregnable.

Presently, as the Garibaldians descended further and further into the plain, a distant volley was heard in the direction of Santa Marina, and they knew that Malenchini's men had come up with the extreme right of the Neapolitan semicircle. An eager murmur ran along the ranks, and a mounted officer came riding down the line.

"Silenzio!" said he. "Silenzio!"

It was young Beni. Seeing Saxon and Castle-

towers marching as outsiders, he smiled and nodded, then rose in his stirrups, and reconnoitred ahead.

In the same instant the sharp report of a rifle rang through the canes, and a ball whizzed by. Beni laughed and held up his hat, which was pierced in two places.

"Well aimed, first shot!" said he, and rode back again.

And now the plantations on either side of the road seemed all at once to swarm with invisible foes. Ball after ball whistled through the canes, gap after gap opened suddenly in the forward ranks. Those in the rear flung themselves by hundreds into the vineyards, firing almost at random, and guided only by the smoke of their enemies' rifles; but the front poured steadily on.

Every moment the balls flew thicker and the men fell faster. A German to whom Saxon had been speaking but the instant before, went down, stone dead, close against his feet, and Saxon heard the cruel "thud" of the ball as it crashed into his brain. Medici's horse dropped under him; Beni came dashing past again, with a bloody handkerchief bound round his arm; Garibaldi and his officers pressed closer to the front — and still not a single Neapolitan had yet been seen.

Suddenly the whole mass of the centre, quickening its pace in obedience to the word of command, advanced at a run, firing right and left into the cane-brake, and making straight for a point whence the balls had seemed to come thickest. Then came a terrific flash about twenty paces ahead — a rush of smoke — a roar that shook the very earth. The men fell back in confusion. They had been running in the very teeth of a masked battery!

As the smoke cleared, the ground was seen to be literally ploughed up with grape-shot, and strewn with dead and dying.

Castletowers flung down his rifle, rushed in among the wounded, and dragged first one, then another, into the shelter of the cane-brake.

Saxon clambered into an olive-tree beside the road, and, heedless of the balls that came peppering round him, began coolly picking off the Neapolitan gunners.

In the meanwhile Medici's columns had recoiled upon those behind, and the whole mass was thrown into disorder. To add to the confusion, a cry went up that Garibaldi was wounded.

At this critical moment, while the road was yet blocked with men, Major Vaughan came galloping round by the front. Despatched with orders to the rear, and unable to force his way through, he had chosen this perilous alternative. Dashing across the open space between the battery and the Garibaldians, he at once became the target of a dozen invisible rifles, was seen to reel in his saddle, sway over, and fall within a foot or two of Saxon's olive-tree.

In less than a second the young man had leaped down, lifted the dragoon in his strong arms, carried him out of the road, and placed him with his back against the tree.

"Are you much hurt?" he asked eagerly.

Vaughan bent his head feebly.

"Take my horse," he said, speaking in broken gasps, and keeping his hand pressed close against his side. "Ride round to the rear — bid Dunn bring up the reserve — and charge the battery — in flank."

"I will; but can you bear to be carried a few yards further?"

"Tell him there's a wall — to the left of the guns — under cover of which — he can bring up — his men."

"Yes, yes; but first of all . . . ."

"Confound you! — go at once — or the day — is lost!"

Saying which, he leaned forward, pointed impatiently to the horse, and fell over on his face.

Saxon just lifted him — looked at the white face — laid the head gently back, sprang into Gulnare's empty saddle, and rode off at full speed. As he did so, he saw that Medici's men had formed again, that Garibaldi was himself cheering them on to the attack, and that Castletowers had fallen in with the advancing columns.

To rush to the rear, deliver his orders, dismount, and tie up the Arab in a place of safety, was the work of only a few moments. He then returned with Dunn's regiment, threading his way through the vines like the rest, and approaching the battery under cover of a wall and ditch away to the left, as Vaughan had directed.

Coming up to the battery, they found a sharp struggle already begun — the Neapolitans defending their guns at the point of the bayonet — Medici's men swarming gallantly over the earthworks, and Garibaldi, sword in hand, in the midst of the fray.

The word was given — the reserve charged at a run, and Saxon found himself the next moment inside the battery, driven up against a gun-carriage, and engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with two Neapolitan gunners, both of whom he shot dead with his revolver.

"Drag off the guns!" shouted Colonel Dunn.

The men flung themselves upon the pieces, surrounded, seized, and put them instantly in motion — the Neapolitans fell back, opened out to right and left, and made way for their cavalry.

Then Saxon heard a coming thunder of hoofs; saw a sudden vision of men, and horses, and uplifted sabres; was conscious of firing his last cartridge in the face of a dragoon who seemed to be bending over him in the act to strike — and after that remembered nothing more.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Barricade in the Via Lombardi.

Disagreeably conscious of being roused, as it were against his will, from something heavier than sleep, of a painful struggle for breath, and of a sudden deluge of cold water, Saxon opened his eyes, and found Lord Castletowers leaning over him.

"Where am I?" he asked, staring round in a bewildered way. "What is the matter with me?"

"Nothing, I hope, my dear fellow," replied his friend. "Five minutes ago, I pulled you out from under a man and a horse, and made certain you were dead; but since then, having fetched a little water and brought you round, and, being, moreover, unable to find any holes in your armour, I am inclined to hope that no damage has been done. Do you think you can get up?"

Saxon took the Earl's hand, and rose without much difficulty. His head ached, and he felt dizzy; but that was all.

"I suppose I have been stunned," he said, looking round at the empty battery. "Is the battle won and over?"

The guns were gone, and the ground was ploughed with their heavy wheel-tracks. Dark pools of blood and heaps of slain showed where the struggle had been fiercest; and close against Saxon's feet lay the bodies of a cuirassier and two Neapolitan gunners — all three shot by his own hand.

"Why, no; the battle is not over," replied the Earl; "neither can I say that it is won; but it is more than half won. We have taken the guns, and the Neapolitans have retreated into the town; and now a halt has been sounded, and the men are taking a couple of hours' rest. The bridge over the Nocito, and all the open country up to the gates of Melazzo, are ours."

"There has been sharp fighting here," said Saxon.

"The sharpest we have seen to-day," replied the Earl. "Their cavalry retook the guns and drove Dunn's men out of the battery; but our fellows, divided on each side of the road, received them between two fires, and when they tried to charge back again, barred the road and shot the leaders down. It was splendidly done; but Garibaldi was in imminent danger for a few moments, and, I believe, shot one trooper with his own hand. After that, the Neapolitans broke through and escaped, leaving the guns and battery in our hands."

"And you saw it all?"

"All. I was among those who barred the road, and was close behind Garibaldi the whole time. And now, as you seem to be tolerably steady on your legs again, I propose that we go down to some more shel-

tered place, and get something to eat. This Sicilian noonday sun is fierce enough to melt the brains in one's skull; and fighting makes men hungry."

Some large wood-stores and barns had been broken open for the accommodation of the troops, and thither the friends repaired for rest and refreshment. Lying in the shelter of a shed beside the Nocito, they ate their luncheon of bread and fruit, smoked their cigarettes, and listened to the pleasant sound of the torrent hurrying to the sea. All around and about, in the shade of every bush and the shelter of every shed, lay the tired soldiers — a motley, dusty, war-stained throng, some eating, some sleeping, some smoking, some bathing their hot feet in the running stream, some, with genuine Italian thoughtlessness, playing at *morra* as they lay side by side on the greensward, gesticulating as eagerly, and laughing as gaily, as though the reign of battle and bloodshed had passed away from the earth. Now and then a wounded man was carried past on a temporary litter; now and then a Neapolitan prisoner was brought in; now and then a harmless gun was fired from the fortress. Thus the hot noon went by, and for two brief hours peace prevailed.

"Poor Vaughan!" said the Earl, now hearing of his death for the first time. "He had surely some presentiment upon his mind this morning. What has become of the horse?"

Saxon explained that he had sent it to the rear, with orders that it should be conveyed back to Meri, and carefully attended to.

"I do not forget," he added, "that we are the repositories of his will, and that Gulnare is now a legacy.

I think it will be wise to send her to Palermo for the present, to the care of Signor Colonna."

"Undoubtedly. Do you know, Trefalden, I have more than suspected at times that — that he loved Miss Colonna."

"I should not wonder if he did," replied Saxon, gloomily.

"Well, he died a soldier's death, and to-morrow, if I life, I will see that he has a soldier's burial. A braver fellow never entered the service."

And now, the allotted time having expired, the troops were again assembled, and the columns formed for action. Garibaldi went on board the Tuckori, a Neapolitan steam-frigate that had gone over to him with men, arms, and ammunition complete at an early stage of the war, and was now lying off Melazzo in the bay to the west of the promontory. Hence, with no other object than to divert the attention of the garrison, he directed a rapid fire on the fortress, while his army advanced in three divisions to the assault of the town.

Medici took the westward beach; Cosenz the road to the Messina gate; and Malenchini the Porta di Palermo. Saxon and Castletowers marched with the Cacciatori and a detachment of Palermitans, under General Cosenz.

By two o'clock they found themselves under the walls of Melazzo. The garrison had by this time become aware of the advancing columns. First one shell, then another, then half a dozen together, came soaring like meteors over the heads of the besiegers, who only rushed up the more eagerly to the assault, and battered the more desperately against the gate. A shot or two

from an old twelve-pounder brought it down presently with a crash; the Garibaldians poured through; and, in the course of a few seconds, almost without knowing how they came there, Saxon and Castletowers found themselves inside the walls, face to face with a battalion of Neapolitan infantry.

Both bodies fired. The Neapolitans, having delivered their volley, retreated up the street. The Garibaldians followed. Presently the Neapolitans turned, fired again, and again retreated. They repeated this manœuvre several times, the Garibaldians always firing and following, till they came to the market-place in the centre of the town. Here they found Colonel Dunn's regiment in occupation of one side of the quadrangle, and a considerable body of Neapolitan troops on the other. The air was full of smoke, and the ground scattered over with groups of killed and wounded. As the smoke cleared, they could see the Neapolitans on the one hand steadily loading and aiming — on the other, Dunn's men running tumultuously to and fro, keeping up a rapid but irregular fire.

No sooner, however, had the new comers emerged upon the scene, than a mounted officer came galloping towards them through the thick of the fire.

"Send round a detachment to the Via Lombardi," he said hurriedly. "They have thrown up a barricade there, which *must* be taken!"

The mention of a barricade was enough for Saxon and Castletowers. Leaving the combatants in the market-place to fight the fight out for themselves, they started with the detachment and made their way round by a labyrinth of deserted by-streets at the back of the piazza.

A shot was presently fired down upon them from a neighbouring roof — they advanced at a run — turned the angle of the next street — were greeted with three simultaneous volleys from the street and the houses on each side, and found themselves in face of the barricade. It was a mere pile of carts, paving stones, and miscellaneous rubbish, about eight feet in height; but, being manned with trained riflemen, and protected by the houses on each side, every window of which bristled with gun-barrels, it proved more formidable than it looked.

The detachment, which consisted mainly of Palermitan recruits, fell back in disorder, returning only a confused and feeble fire, and leaving some four or five of their number on the ground.

"*Avanti!*" cried the officer in command.

But not a man stirred.

At that instant the Neapolitans poured in another destructive volley, whereupon the front ranks fairly turned, and tried to escape to the rear.

"*Poltroni!*" shouted their captain, striking right and left with the flat of his sword, and running along the lines like a madman.

At the same moment Castletowers knocked down one defaulter with the butt-end of his rifle, while Saxon seized another by the collar, dragged him back to the front, drew his revolver from his belt with one hand, and with the other carried the man bodily up against the barricade.

It was a simple act of strength and daring, but it turned the tide as nothing else could have done. Impulsive as savages, and transported in a moment from one extreme of feeling to another, the Sicilians burst

into a storm of *vivas*, and flung themselves at the barricade like tigers.

The Neapolitans might pour in their deadly fire now from housetop and window, might entrench themselves behind a hedge of bayonets, might thrust the dead back upon the living, and defend every inch of their position as desperately as they pleased, but nothing could daunt the courage of their assailants. The men who were running away but a moment before, were now rushing recklessly upon death. Shot down by scores, they yet pressed on, clambering over the bodies of their fallen comrades, shouting "*Viva Garibaldi!*" under the muzzles of the Neapolitan rifles, and seizing the very bayonets that were pointed against them.

The struggle was short and bloody. It had lasted scarcely three minutes when the Palermitans poured over in one irresistible wave, and the Neapolitans fled precipitately into the piazza beyond.

The victors at once planted a tricolor on the summit of the barricade, manned it with some thirty of their own best riflemen, and proceeded to dislodge such of the enemy as yet retained possession of the houses on either side.

In the meanwhile the Garibaldian officer ran up to Saxon with open arms, and thanked him enthusiastically.

"Gallant Inglese!" he said, "but for you, our flag would not be flying here at this moment."

To whom Saxon, pale as death and pointing down to the pile of fallen men at the foot of the barricade, replied. —

"Signor Capitano, I miss my friend. For God's

sake grant me the assistance of a couple of your soldiers to search for his body!"

It was a ghastly task.

The Neapolitans had escaped as soon as they found their position untenable; but the loss of the attacking party was very great. Most of the men immediately under the barricade had been cruelly bayonetted. The dead wore a terrible expression of agony on their colourless faces; but many yet breathed, and those who were conscious pleaded piteously to be put out of their sufferings. One by one, the dead were flung aside and the wounded carried down to the shade of the houses. One by one, Saxon Trefalden looked into each man's face, helping tenderly to carry the wounded and reverently to dispose the limbs of the dead, and watching every moment for the finding of his friend.

At length the last poor corpse was lifted — the search completed — the frightful bead-roll told over. Thirty-two were dead, five dying, eleven wounded; but amongst all these, the Earl of Castletowers had no place. Saxon could scarcely believe it. Again and again he went the round of dead and dying; and at last, with bloodstained hands and clothes, and anxious heart, sat down at the foot of the barricade, and asked himself what he should do next.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Last of the Battle.

It was now nearly four o'clock in the afternoon. Throughout the search at the barricade Saxon had seen the shells flying at a great height overhead, and heard the battle going on unceasingly in the streets of the town. Sometimes the sounds advanced, sometimes retreated; but never ceased for one minute together. Finding at length that neither friends nor foes came round in their direction, the men posted at the barricade became impatient and dropped away, one by one; and presently Saxon, being to all appearance no more likely to find his friend in one place than another, followed their example.

He traversed one whole street without seeing a living creature; then, coming to a cross-road, paused and listened. The musketry now seemed to be very distant, but he could not tell precisely from what quarter the sound proceeded. While he was yet hesitating, a couple of Neapolitan soldiers came running towards him. Seeing an armed Garibaldian they stopped short, as if doubting which way to turn; and Saxon called to them to surrender.

At that moment some six or eight red-shirts made their appearance at the top of the street, in full chase. The Neapolitans immediately fired upon Saxon, flung away their rifles, and fled down a by-street to the left.

But the balls glanced harmlessly by, and Saxon, anxious to know how the great interests of the day

were faring elsewhere, went on his way, and left the fugitives to their pursuers.

A few steps further on, he fell in with a detachment of Tuscans led by young Beni, now on foot.

"*Holà! amico*," cried the Palermitan, "where do you come from?"

"From the barricade in the Via Lombardi. And you?"

"From the beach, where those cursed Regi have been pouring down shot and shell as thick as fire-stones from Etna."

"How goes the day?"

"Triumphantly. We are driving them up towards the castle from all sides. Come and see!"

So Saxon fell in with the Tuscan company; and as they pressed up against the hill, winding round by a steep lane on the eastern side of the town, the young men, in a few hurried sentences, exchanged such news as each had to tell.

"The whole of the lower part of the town is ours," said Beni. "Medici's men have done wonders — the Genoese carabineers have lost half their number — Peard's company has possession of an old windmill on the heights above the castle, whence they have rifled the enemy clear out of the northern works."

"This is great news!"

"It *is* great news. Before another hour is past we shall have them all shut up in the castle, like mice in a trap."

"Where is your horse?"

"Shot under me, half an hour ago. Where is your friend?"

"Safe, I hope. He vanished in the mêlée down at the barricade, and I have not seen him since."

"Silence! I hear a tramp of feet — halt!"

The column halted, and in the sudden silence that ensued, the approaching footsteps of a considerable body of men were distinctly audible.

It was an exciting moment. The lane was winding, steep, and narrow. On one side rose a stupendous cliff of solid rock; on the other ran a low wall, overhanging the poorest quarter of the town. A worse place for a hostile encounter could scarcely have been selected; but the young Palermitan, unused to command as he was, at once saw the difficulty of his position, and prepared to meet it.

Silently and promptly, he drew up his little troop across the road — the front row kneeling on one knee, the second stooping, the third standing erect — all ready to greet the enemy with a deadly fire as soon as they should come in sight. In the meanwhile, Saxon had slung his rifle over his shoulders and begun climbing the face of the cliff. Where there was footing for a goat there was always footing for him; and almost before Beni knew what had become of him, he was posted behind an overhanging bush some twenty feet above. About a dozen others immediately followed his example, till every shrub and projecting angle of rock concealed a rifle.

The Garibaldians had but just completed their preparations when the white cross-belts of the Neapolitans appeared at the turn of the road, some sixty yards ahead.

Evidently unprepared to find their passage resisted, they recoiled at the sight of the Garibaldians, who instantly poured in their first volley. They then fired a *few* shots and fell back out of sight, as if hesitating

whether to advance or retreat. The nature of the ground was such that neither party could see the extent of the other's strength; and Beni had been careful to turn this circumstance to the best advantage. In the meanwhile his men had reloaded, and were waiting in the same order as before.

They had not to wait long. In another second there arose a shout of "*Viva il Ré!*" and the royalists, cheered on by their officers, came back with fixed bayonets, at the *pas de charge* — a narrow, compact, resolute torrent, which looked as if it must carry all before it.

Again the Tuscans delivered their deliberate and deadly fire — again, again, and again; and at each discharge the foremost Neapolitans went down like grass before the scythe. There seemed to be a charmed line drawn across the road, beyond which they could not pass. As fast as they reached it, they fell; as fast as they fell those behind rushed up, and were shot down in their turn.

And all this time the tirailleurs on the cliff-side dropped in their unerring bullets upon the advancing column, bringing down the hindmost men, and picking off each officer as he came into sight.

The struggle lasted but a few moments, and was over in less time than it takes to tell.

Mowed down by an irresistible fire, little guessing by what a mere handful of men they were being held in check, and left almost without an officer to command them, the Neapolitans all at once desisted from the attack, and retreated as rapidly as they had charged, dragging off some six or eight of their wounded, and

leaving a rampart of their dead piled up halfway between themselves and their opponents.

"*Viva Garibaldi!*" cried Saxon, swinging himself lightly from bush to bush, and leaping down into the road.

"*Viva Garibaldi!*" shouted Beni's troop, eager to pursue, but held back by their young leader, who knew that they would have no chance if once they betrayed the insignificance of their numbers. Throwing himself before them, he forbade a man to stir. At the same time the tramp of the enemy, broken, hurried, and disordered, died rapidly away, and the Garibaldians, only two of whom were slightly wounded, remained in undisputed possession of their little Thermopylæ.

In high spirits, they then resumed their march; but they saw no more Neapolitans. When the lane opened presently upon a broad platform overlooking the town, they halted. Above them rose the castle ramparts, apparently deserted. Below them lay the streets and squares of Melazzo, with the open country beyond. A strange silence seemed suddenly to have fallen upon the day. There was no echo of musketry to be heard upon the air — no smoke-wreath visible, even in places where the combat had been hottest half-an-hour before. Save a distant shouting here and there, and an occasional shell thrown from some part of the fortifications far away to the westward side of the castle, the tumult of battle seemed to have passed magically away.

"What does it all mean?" said Saxon, breathlessly.

"Well," replied Beni, "I suppose it means that the battle is over."

At that moment a detachment of Malenchini's brigade made its appearance at the farther side of the

platform, shouting, "*Viva l'Italia!*" and planted the tricolor on the highest point of the parapet overlooking the town.

The battle was indeed over; the long day's fight fought gallantly out, and crowned with victory. The whole of the town, up to the very gates of the castle, was in the hands of the liberators.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Saxon pursues his Search.

The battle over, orders were issued for the construction of barricades in all the approaches to the castle. Weary as they were after their long day's fighting, the Garibaldians then stacked their muskets and went to work with a will. Pavements were hastily torn up, carts dragged from the sheds in which their owners had left them, and doors taken from their hinges. Before sundown, a chain of extempore defences was thrown up at every point of danger, and the royalists were effectually imprisoned in their own stronghold.

Then, guarded only by a few sentinels posted upon the barricades, the army dispersed itself about the streets and piazzas, and lay down to rest by hundreds in the churches, the deserted houses, and even the open doorways along the streets.

In the meanwhile Saxon went about from barricade to barricade, seeking his friend and questioning every one he met, but seeking and questioning in vain. One Garibaldian remembered to have seen him with the Pavia Company during a sharp skirmish up in some

gardens near the castle. Another thought he had observed him down on the Marina. A third was certain that he had been killed by the bursting of a shell; while a fourth no less positively asserted that he was with Peard's company in the windmill above the castle. Confused by these contradictory statements, Saxon wandered hither and thither till the twilight came on; and then, utterly exhausted, stretched himself upon a bench in the market-place and fell profoundly asleep.

His sleep lasted only a couple of hours. He had lain down with his mind full of anxiety and apprehension, and no sooner had the first torpor of excessive fatigue passed off than he woke, oppressed by a vague uneasiness, and for the first few moments unable to remember where he was.

He looked round upon a spacious piazza deep in shadow, and scattered over with groups of sleeping soldiers, and stands of arms.

Melazzo taken; Castletowers missing; perhaps wounded — perhaps dead! He sprang to his feet as these recollections flashed upon him, and, half stupefied with sleep, prepared to resume his quest. At the first step he stumbled over the corpse of a Neapolitan grenadier, lying as if asleep, with his white face turned up to the sky. A few paces farther on, he met a couple of Garibaldians bearing away a wounded man upon a shutter, and preceded by a torch-bearer.

Learning from these that there were several temporary hospitals in the town, as well as others beyond the gates, he resolved to visit all before pursuing his search in other directions. He then followed them to a church close by, the stone floor of which had been laid down with straw for the reception of the wounded.

It was a strange and piteous sight. The torches planted here and there against the walls and pillars of the building served only to make visible the intense gloom of the vaulted roof above. All around, more or less dangerously wounded, lay some sixty soldiers; while gliding noiselessly to and fro were seen the surgeons and nurses, busy on their work of mercy.

Pausing at the door, he asked the sentry if he knew anything of an English nobleman — Lord Castletowers by name — whom he had reason to fear must be among the wounded.

"An Englishman?" said the sentry. "*Si, amico,* there was an Englishman brought in about two hours ago."

So Saxon went up the nave of the church and preferred his inquiry to one of the nurses.

She shook her head.

"Alas!" she replied, "his case was hopeless. He died about ten minutes after he was brought in."

"Died!"

"His poor body has not yet been removed. It lies yonder, close under the pulpit."

Half in hope, half in dread, the young man snatched a torch from the nearest sconce, and flew to the spot indicated. The shattered corpse lay placidly enough, with a smile upon its dead lips and the eyes half-closed, as if in sleep; but it was not the corpse of Lord Castletowers.

With a deep-drawn breath of relief, Saxon then turned away, and passing gently along the line of patients, looked at each pale face in turn. Having done this, he inquired his way to the next hospital, which was established in the ground-floor of the Polizia.

In order to reach this place, he had to recross the piazza. Here he met three or four more torch parties; for the Garibaldians were still anxiously searching for their wounded in all parts of the town.

At the door of the Polizia he accosted the sentry with the same question that he had been asking at every barricade and outpost in the place. Could he give him any information of an English gentleman, named Lord Castletowers?

The sentry, who happened to be a Frenchman, lifted his cap with the best-bred air imaginable, and asked, in return, if he had the honour of addressing Monsieur Trefalden.

Saxon replied in the affirmative; but . . .

"*Alors, que monsieur se donne la peine d'entrer. Il trouvera son ami, mi-lord Castletowers, dans la première salle à gauche.*"

Scarcely waiting to thank the friendly Gaul for his intelligence, Saxon rushed in, and almost the first face on which his eyes rested was the face of his friend.

He was sitting on the side of a bench that had evidently been serving him for a bed. He had a large cloak thrown over his shoulders, and looked rather pale; but was, nevertheless, tranquilly smoking a cigar, and chatting with his nearest neighbour.

"So, Trefalden," said he, as Saxon burst into the room, "you have found me out at last! I knew you would be looking for me all over the place, if you were alive to do it; so I left word at the door that you were to apply within. Excuse my left hand."

"I am so glad, Castletowers!" exclaimed Saxon. "I was never so glad in my life!"

"Gently, my dear fellow — gently! You need not shake one's hand quite so vehemently."

"What is the matter? Where are you hurt?"

"In the right arm — confound it!"

"Very badly?"

"No. That is to say, I am not doomed to amputation; but there's an end, so far as I am concerned, to glory and gunpowder — and that is quite bad enough."

CHAPTER XXX.

In Durance Vile.

THE mystery of the Earl's disappearance was simple enough when it came to be explained. He had been carried over the barricade in the last great rush, and instead of remaining on the spot like Saxon to fight it out to the last blow, had rushed on with some twenty others, in pursuit of the first fugitives. Having chased the Neapolitans into a blind alley, taken them prisoners, and deprived them of their arms, the Garibaldians then fell in with the Pavia company and shared with them some of the hottest work that was done in Melazzo that day.

It was while with this gallant company, and at the moment when he was assisting to plant the tricolor on the top of a summer-house in a long-contested garden, that Lord Castletowers received two shots in the right arm, and was forced to go back to the ambulances in the rear.

His wounds, though severe, were not in the least dangerous; one bullet having lodged in the biceps

muscle of the upper arm, and another having fractured the ulnar bone of the forearm. Both, however, had been already extracted before Saxon found his way to the Polizia, and the surgeon in attendance assured them that Lord Castletowers would in time regain the use of his arm as completely as if no mischance had ever befallen it. In the meanwhile, to be sure, the results were sufficiently inconvenient. The Earl's military career was brought to an abrupt conclusion, and his hope of doing something brilliant — something that even Miss Colonna should be forced to admire — was nipped in the bud. These things were hard to bear, and demanded all the patience that he could summon to his aid.

Their campaign thus unexpectedly ended, the young men would gladly have gone back at once to their little yacht, and set sail in search of "fresh fields and pastures new;" but to that proposition the *medico* would not listen. So they lingered on in Melazzo day after day, living for the most part in a cottage beyond the walls, and passing the hot and weary hours as best they might.

It was a dull time, though cursorily enlivened by the surrender of the garrison. They saw the Neapolitan transports steam into the bay, and witnessed the embarkation of Bosco and his troops.

When this interlude was played out, the Garibaldians began to look towards Messina and speculate eagerly on what might next be done. Then came rumours of a general evacuation of the royalist strongholds; and by-and-by they learned beyond doubt that the tedium of success was not likely to be relieved by any more fighting in the island of Sicily.

Somewhat comforted by this intelligence, and still more comforted by a note which the Earl received from Signor Colonna the fourth day after the battle, the young men submitted to the semi-imprisonment of Melazzo, and saw Garibaldi depart with the main body of his army somewhat less regretfully than they might otherwise have done.

Brief as a military despatch, the Italian's note ran thus: —

"Caro Gervase. The victory which has just been won terminates the war in Sicily. Dissension and terror reign in the Cabinet at Naples. Months will probably elapse before another blow is struck; and it is possible that even that blow may not be needed. In the meanwhile give ear to earnest counsel. Sheath thy sword and pursue thy journey in peace. This in confidence from the friend of thy childhood.

"G. C."

It was something to receive this assurance from a man like Colonna — a man who knew better than even Garibaldi himself the probabilities and prospects of the war. So the friends made the best of their position, and amused themselves by planning what they would do when they received the *medico's* order of release.

Norway was now out of the question. By the time they could reach Bergen the season would be nearly past; besides which, the Earl was forbidden to expose his wounded arm to so severe a change of temperature. They therefore proposed to confine their voyage to the basin of the Mediterranean, seeing what-

ever was practicable, and touching, if possible, at Malta, Alexandria, Smyrna, Athens, Naples, Cadiz, and Lisbon, by the way. To this list, for reasons known only to himself, Saxon added the name of Sidon.

At length Lord Castletowers was pronounced fit for removal, though not yet well enough to dispense with medical care. So Saxon cut the knot of that difficulty by engaging the services of a young Sicilian surgeon; and, thus attended, they once more went on board the Albula, and weighed anchor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Mr. Greatorex in Search of an Investment.

While Saxon and his friend were yachting and fighting, and London was yet full to overflowing, Mr. Laurence Greatorex bent his steps one brilliant July morning in the direction of Chancery Lane, and paid a visit to William Trefalden.

He had experienced some little difficulty in making up his mind to this step; for it was an exceedingly disagreeable one, and required no small amount of effort in its accomplishment. He had seen and avoided the lawyer often enough during the last two or three months: but he had never spoken to him since that affair of the stopped cheque. His intention had been never to exchange civil speech or salutation with William Trefalden again; but to hate him heartily, and manifest his hatred openly, all the days of his life. And he would have done this uncompromisingly, if his regard for Saxon had not come in the way.

But he liked that young fellow with a genuine liking (just as he hated the lawyer with a genuine hatred) and, cost what it might, he was determined to serve him. So, having thought over their last conversation — that conversation which took place in the train, between Portsmouth and London; having looked in vain for the registration of any company which seemed likely to be the one referred to; having examined no end of reports, prospectuses, lists of directors, and the like, he resolved, despite his animosity and his reluctance, to see William Trefalden face to face, and try what could be learned in an interview.

Perhaps, even in the very suspicion which prompted him to look after Saxon's interests, despite Saxon's own unwillingness to have them looked after, there may have been a lurking hope, a half-formed anticipation of something like vengeance. If William Trefalden was not acting quite fairly on Saxon Trefalden's behalf, if there should prove to be knavery or laxity in some particular of these unknown transactions, would it not be quite as sweet to expose the defrauder as to assist the defrauded?

Laurence Greatorex did not plainly tell himself that he was actuated by a double motive in what he was about to do. Men of his stamp are not given to analysing their own thoughts and feelings. Keen-sighted enough to detect the hidden motives of others, they prefer to make the best of themselves, and habitually look at their own acts from the most favourable point of view. So the banker, having made up his mind to accept the disagreeable side of his present undertaking, complacently ignored that which might possibly turn out to be quite the reverse, and per-

suaded himself, as he walked up Fleet Street, that he was doing something almost heroic in the cause of friendship.

He sent in his card, and was shown at once to William Trefalden's private room.

"Good morning, Mr. Trefalden," said he, with that noisy affectation of ease that Sir Charles Burgoyne so especially disliked; "you are surprised to see me here, I don't doubt."

But William Trefalden, who would have manifested no surprise had Laurence Greatorex walked into his room in lawn sleeves and a mitre, only bowed, pointed to a seat, and replied: —

"Not at all. I am happy to see you, Mr. Greatorex."

"Thanks." And the banker sat down, and placed his hat on the table. "Any news from Norway?"

"From my cousin Saxon? No. At present not any."

"Really?"

"I do not expect him to write to me."

"Not at all?"

"Why, no — or, at all events, not more than once during his absence. We have exchanged no promises on the score of correspondence; and I am no friend to letter-writing, unless on business."

"You are quite right, Mr. Trefalden. Mere letter-writing is well enough for school-girls and sweethearts; but it is a delusion and a snare to those who have real work on their hands. One only needs to look at a shelf of Horace Walpole's Correspondence to know that the man was an idler and a trifler all his life."

Mr. Trefalden smiled a polite assent.

"But I am not here this morning to discourse on the evils of pen and ink," said Greatorex. "I have come, Mr. Trefalden, to ask your advice."

"You shall be welcome to the best that my experience can offer," replied the lawyer.

"Much obliged. Before going any further, however, I must take you a little way into my confidence."

Mr. Trefalden bowed.

"You must know that I have a little private property. Not much; only a few thousands; but, little as it is, it is my own; and is *not* invested in the business."

Mr. Trefalden was all attention.

"It is not invested in the business," repeated the banker; "and I do not choose that it should be. I want to keep it apart — snug — safe — handy — wholly and solely at my disposal. You understand?"

Mr. Trefalden, with a furtive smile, replied that he understood perfectly.

"Nor is this all. I have expensive tastes, expensive habits, expensive friends, and therefore I want all I can get for my money. Till lately I have been lending it at — well, no matter at how much per cent; but now it's just been thrown upon my hands again, and I am looking out for a fresh investment."

Mr. Trefalden, leaning back in his chair, was, in truth, not a little perplexed by the frankness with which Laurence Greatorex was placing these facts before him. However, he listened and smiled, kept his wonder to himself, and waited for what should come next.

"After this preface," added Greatorex, "I suppose I need scarcely tell you the object of my visit."

"I have not yet divined it," replied the lawyer.

"I want to know if you can help me to an investment."

Mr. Trefalden made no secret of the surprise with which he heard this request.

"*I* help you to an investment!" he repeated. "My dear sir, you amaze me! In matters of that kind, you must surely be far better able to help yourself than I am to help you."

"Upon my soul, now, I don't see that, Mr. Trefalden."

"Nay, the very nature of your own business . . . ."

"This is a matter which I am anxious to keep apart from our business — altogether apart," interrupted Mr. Greatorex.

"I quite understand that: but what I do not understand is, that you, a banker, should apply to me, a lawyer, for counsel on a point of this kind."

"Can you not understand that I may place more reliance on your opinion than on my own?"

Mr. Trefalden smiled polite incredulity.

"My dear Mr. Greatorex," he replied, "it is as if *I* were to ask *your* opinion on a point of common law."

Laurence Greatorex laughed, and drew his chair a few inches nearer.

"Well, Mr. Trefalden," he said; "I will be quite plain and open with you. Supposing, now, that I had good reason for believing that you could help me to the very thing of which I am in search, would it then be strange, if I came to you as I have come to-day?"

"Certainly not; but . . ."

"Excuse me — I *have* been told something that leads me to hope you can put a fine investment in my way, if you will take the trouble to do so."

"Then I regret to say that you have been told wrongly."

"But my informant . . . ."

"— was in error, Mr. Greatorex. I have nothing of the kind in my power — absolutely nothing."

"Is it possible?"

"So possible, Mr. Greatorex, that, had I five thousand pounds of my own to invest at this moment, I should be compelled to seek precisely such counsel as you have just been seeking from me."

The banker leaned across the table in such a manner as to bring his face within a couple of feet of Mr. Trefalden's.

"But what about the new Company?" said he.

The lawyer's heart seemed suddenly to stand still, and for a moment — just one *moment* — his matchless self-possession was shaken. He felt himself change colour. He scarcely dared trust himself to speak, lest his voice should betray him.

Greatorex's eyes flashed with triumph; but the lawyer recovered his presence of mind as quickly as he had lost it.

"Pardon me," he said coldly; "but to what Company do you allude?"

"To what Company should I allude, except the one in which you have invested your cousin Saxon's money?"

Mr. Trefalden looked his questioner haughtily in the face.

"You labour under some mistake, Mr. Greatorex,"

he said. "In the first place, you are referring to some association with which I am unacquainted . . ."

"But . . ,"

"And in the second place, I am at a loss to understand how my cousin's affairs should possess any interest for you."

"A first-rate speculation possesses the very strongest interest for me," replied the banker.

Mr. Trefalden shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"The law, perhaps, has made me over-cautious," said he; "but I abhor the very name of speculation."

"And yet, if I understood your cousin rightly, his money has been invested in a speculation," persisted Greatorex.

The lawyer surveyed his visitor with a calm hauteur that made Greatorex fidget in his chair.

"I cannot tell," said he, "how far my cousin, in his ignorance of money matters, may have unintentionally misled you upon this point; but I must be permitted to put you right in one particular. Saxon Trefalden has certainly not speculated with his fortune, because I should no more counsel him to speculate than he would speculate without my counsel. I trust I am sufficiently explicit."

"Explicit enough, Mr. Trefalden, but . ."

The lawyer looked up inquiringly.

"But disappointing, you see — confoundedly disappointing. I made sure after what he had told me. . ."

"May I inquire what my cousin did tell you, Mr. Greatorex?"

"Certainly. He said you had invested a large

part of his property, and the whole of your own, in the shares of some new Company, the name and objects of which were for the present to be kept strictly private."

"No more than this?"

"No more — except that it was to be the most brilliant thing of the day."

Mr. Trefalden smiled.

"Poor boy!" he said. "What a droll mistake and yet how like him!"

Seeing him so unruffled and amused, the City man's belief in the success of his own scheme was momentarily staggered. He began to think he had made no such capital discovery after all.

"I hope you mean to share the joke, Mr. Trefalden," he said, uneasily.

"Willingly. As is always the case in these misapprehensions, Saxon was a little right and a good deal wrong in his story. His money has been *lent* to a Company on first-rate security — not invested in shares, or embarked in any kind of speculation. I am not at liberty to name the Company — it is sufficient that he could nowhere have found more satisfactory debtors."

"I suppose, then, there is no chance in the same direction for outsiders?"

"My cousin has advanced, I believe, as much as the Company desires to borrow."

"Humph! — just my luck. Well, I am much obliged to you, Mr. Trefalden."

"Not in the least. I only regret that I can be of no service to you, Mr. Greatorex."

They rose simultaneously, and, as they did so, each read mistrust in the other's eyes.

"Does he really want an investment?" thought the lawyer; "or is it a mere scheme of detection from first to last?"

"Has he caught scent of my little game?" the banker asked himself; "and is this plausible story nothing after all but a clever invention?"

These, however, were questions that could not be asked, much less answered; so Laurence Greatorex and William Trefalden parted civilly enough, and hated each other more heartily than ever.

There was one, however, who witnessed their parting, and took note thereof — one who marked the expression of the banker's face as he left the office, the look of dismay on William Trefalden's as he returned to his private room. That keen observer was Mr. Keckwitch; and Mr. Keckwitch well knew how to turn his quick apprehension to account.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Life in the East.

A LITTLE yacht rides at anchor in the harbour of Alexandria, and two young Franks, one of whom carries his right arm in a sling, are wandering to and fro, drinking deeply of that cup of enchantment — a first day in the East.

Alexandria is by no means a favourable specimen of an Oriental city. On the contrary, it is a busy, modern trading port, with an unhealthy climate, few

architectural antiquities, and no adjacent scenery worth remark; but it is the East, for all that, and therefore a new world to those who have not yet seen Cairo, or Smyrna, or Constantinople.

So these two young Franks roam hither and thither in a state of semi-beatitude, conscious neither of hunger, nor thirst, nor fatigue, nor hardly of the heat, which, though it is but nine o'clock in the morning, is already tremendous.

First of all, having but just stepped ashore, they plunge into the Arab quarter of the town, passing through a labyrinth of foul lanes fenced in on either side by blank, windowless dwellings, that look as if they had all turned their backs to the street, and coming presently to thoroughfares of a somewhat better class, where the tall houses seem almost toppling together and the latticed balconies all but touch, and the sky is narrowed to a mere ribbon of vivid ultramarine high overhead. Here are beggars at every corner, calling loudly upon Allah and the passer-by — donkey-boys, noisy, importunate, and picturesque — vagrant dogs, hungry and watchful — now and then a mounted Arab riding like mad and scattering the foot-passengers before him right and left as he flies along. Here, too, are shops with open fronts and shadowy backgrounds, some gorgeous with silks and shawls; some rich with carpets; some fragrant with precious gums and spices; some glittering with sabres and daggers of Damascus. In each shop, sitting cross-legged on floor or counter, presides the turbaned salesman, smoking his silver-lidded pipe, and indifferent alike to custom and fate. Now comes a Moorish arch of delicate creamy stone, revealing glimpses of a shady court-yard set round

with latticed windows, and enclosing a palm-tree and a fountain. One slender, quivering shaft of sunshine falls direct on the green leaves and sparkling water-drops, and on an earthen jar standing by — just such a jar as Morgiana may have filled up with boiling oil in the days of the good Caliph Haroun al Raschid. And now comes a string of splay-footed camels, noiseless and dogged-looking, laden with bundles of brush-wood as wide as the street, and led by sleek Nubian slaves, with white loin-cloths and turbans. Avoiding this procession, our two Franks plunge into a dark arcade of shops, lighted from above. This is a bazaar — one path in a catacomb of passages, all full of Oriental names, Oriental goods, and Oriental perfumes. Here are alleys where they sell nothing but slippers; alleys of jewels; alleys of furs, of tobacco, of silks, of sweetmeats and drugs, of books, of glass and ivory wares, of harness, of sponges, and even of printed Manchester goods, Sheffield cutlery, and Coventry ribbons. Here crowds a motley throng of Europeans and Asiatics; impatient Arabs, with the camel's-hair band upon their brows; stately Moslems, turbaned and slippered; Greeks in crimson jackets and dingy white kilts; dervishes in their high felt caps; magnificent dragomen in huge muslin trousers, Armenians, Copts, Syrians, negroes, Jews of all climates, and travellers from every quarter of the globe.

The water-carrier, with his jar of sherbet on his head, tinkles his brass drinking-cups in the ears of the passers-by; the tart-seller offers his melon-puffs; and here, just leaving the fruit-shop, where she has doubtless been buying "Syrian apples and Othmanee quinces, peaches of Oman, and Egyptian limes," comes the fair

Amine herself, followed by that identical porter who was "a man of sense, and had perused histories."

Wandering on thus in a dream of Arabian Nights, the young men, having fortified themselves with sherbet, presently mount a couple of very thoroughbred, high-spirited donkeys, and set off for the ruins of ancient Alexandria. These ruins lie out beyond the town-walls, amid a sandy, dreary, hillocky waste that stretches far away for miles and miles beside the sparkling sea. Here they see Pompey's pillar, and Cleopatra's obelisk, and a wilderness of crumbling masonry clothed in a green and golden mantle of wild marigolds all in flower. Here, where once stood the temple of Serapis with its platform of a hundred steps, the wild sea-bird flits unmolested, and the jackals have their lair, and the travellers talk with bated breath of the mighty times gone by — of libraries once the glory, and palaces once the wonder, of the East; of Academies which rose and fell with the philosophies taught within their walls; of historians and metaphysicians and poets, whose very monuments have long since crumbled to dust, but whose utterances have become immortal.

At last, fairly tired out, our Franks are fain to strike their colours, and go back to the town. Here they put up at an English hotel, where they bathe, dine, and rest till the evening; when they again sally forth — this time to call upon the English consul.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

In Search of a Company.

THE consul was not at his office when the travellers presented themselves; but his representative, a very magnificent young clerk, resplendent in rings, chains, and a palm-leaf hat, was there instead. They found this official in the act of writing a letter, humming a tune, and smoking a cigar — all of which occupations he continued to pursue with unabated ardour, notwithstanding that Saxon presented himself before his desk.

"I shall be glad to speak to you, if you please," said Saxon, "when you are at leisure."

"No passport business transacted after two o'clock in the day," replied the clerk, without lifting his eyes.

"Mine is not passport business," replied Saxon.

The clerk hummed another bar, and went on writing.

Saxon began to lose patience.

"I wish to make a simple inquiry," said he; "and I will thank you to lay your pen aside for a moment, while I do so."

The peremptory tone produced its effect. The clerk paused, looked up, lifted his eyebrows with an air of nonchalant insolence, and said: —

"Why the dooce, then, don't you ask it?"

"I wish to know in what part of this city I shall find the offices of the New Overland Route Railway and Steam-Packet Company."

"What do you mean by the *New* Overland Route?" said the clerk.

"I mean a Company so-called — a Company which has lately established an office here in Alexandria?"

"Never heard of any such Company," said the clerk, "nor of any such office."

"Where, then, do you suppose I can obtain this information?"

"Well, I should say — nowhere."

"I think it is my turn to ask what you mean?" said Saxon haughtily.

"My meaning is simple enough," replied the clerk, taking up his pen. "There is no Overland Route or Transit Company in Alexandria."

"But I know that there *is* a Company of that name," exclaimed Saxon.

The clerk shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, very well," said he. "If you know it, that's enough."

And with this he resumed his triple occupation.

At that moment a little glass door opened at the back of the office, and a bald-headed gentleman came out. He bowed.

"You are inquiring," he said, "for some commercial establishment, I believe? If you will permit me to offer a suggestion, I would advise your calling upon Mr. Melchisedek. Mr. Melchisedek is our great commercial authority in Alexandria. He knows everything, and he knows everybody. A man of universal information, and very courteous to strangers. You cannot do better than call on Mr. Melchisedek."

"I am sure," said Saxon, "I am very much obliged to you."

"Not at all — not in the least. Mr. Melchisedek

— anyone will direct you. The viceroy is not better known. Good evening."

So saying, the bald-headed gentleman bowed the travellers to the door and closed it behind them.

"Why, Trefalden," said the Earl, when they were once more in the street, "what interest can you possibly have in an Overland Company? It is some obscure undertaking, depend upon it."

"It won't be obscure for long," replied Saxon, complacently. "It is a magnificent affair; and if the agents out here are keeping it quiet, they have their own reasons for doing so."

"You seem to know all about it," said Castletowers, with some surprise.

"I know a good deal about it."

"And mean to take shares?"

"I have taken shares already," replied Saxon, "to a large amount."

Whereupon the Earl only looked grave, and said nothing.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Great Commercial Authority.

The young men had no difficulty in finding the mansion of Mr. Melchisedek. It was a large, white, Oriental-looking house, with innumerable lattices, a fountain playing in the courtyard, and a crowd of Nubian and Egyptian servants in rich Eastern dresses lounging about the gates.

When Saxon inquired for the master of the house, a grave Armenian in a long robe and lofty cap stepped

forward and conducted the visitors across the courtyard, through a long corridor, and into a small room furnished like a European counting-house. Here they were received by a gentlemanly person seated before a large desk covered with papers.

"Mr. Melchisedek, I presume?" said Saxon.

The gentleman at the desk smiled, and shook his head.

"I am Mr. Melchisedek's secretary," he replied. "At your service."

"I particularly wish to see Mr. Melchisedek himself," said Saxon, "if he will oblige me with five minutes' conversation."

The secretary smiled again; much as a vizier might smile at the request of a stranger who asked to see the sultan.

"If you will do me the favour to state the nature of your business," said he, "I will acquaint Mr. Melchisedek with the particulars. He may then, perhaps, grant you an interview."

So Saxon explained all about the inquiries which he was anxious to make, and the secretary taking their cards with them, left the young men for a few minutes to themselves.

"The Commercial Authority seems to be a mighty man in the land," said Lord Castletowers.

"The Commercial Authority has a princely garden," replied Saxon, looking out of the window upon a maze of gorgeous flower-beds, clumps of sycamores and palms, and alleys of shadowy cypress trees.

"Princely, indeed!" said the earl; and quoted a line or two of Tennyson: —

"A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many shadow-chequer'd lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid."

"— By the way, Trefalden, what if the Commercial Authority keeps the Persian girl 'with argent-lidded eyes' hidden up behind yonder lattices?"

At this moment the door softly re-opened, and, instead of the secretary, the Armenian appeared.

He bowed almost to the ground, and requested the effendis to follow him.

Up a broad flight of marble steps they went, and through a long suite of rooms magnificently furnished in a semi-oriental style, with divans and hangings, carpets in which the foot sank noiselessly, statues, massive bronzes, ornamental clocks, and large paintings in heavy Italian frames. Having led them through five of these stately reception rooms the Armenian paused at the entrance to the sixth, held the velvet curtain aside, and stood back to let them pass.

A spacious room still more oriental, and, if possible, still more costly in its decorations, opened before them. The windows admitted the last crimson light of the setting sun. The air was heavy with a mixed perfume of orange-blossoms and roses, and the scented fumes of Turkish tobacco.

As the young men entered, a gaunt figure clothed all in white rose from a sofa at the upper end of the *room*, and stood to receive them.

This was Mr. Melchisedek.

The great Commercial Authority was, beyond doubt, a very extraordinary looking individual. He was a Jew, *pur sang*. It needed no ethnologist to see that. A Jew of marked Semitic type, with deep-set, fiery eyes, a complexion almost the colour of a Roxburgh binding, a high, narrow, intellectual forehead, and a "sable-silvered" beard and moustache. He wore a crimson fez and a suit of fine white linen that shone all over like the richest satin. The buttons of his coat and waistcoat were also of linen; but in his shirt he wore three superb brilliants, and the long, slender brown hand which held his chibouque was all ablaze with jewels.

Handing this chibouque to one of four gorgeously attired Nubian slaves that stood behind his sofa, Mr. Melchisedek inclined his head, pointed to a divan, and said in the tone of a sovereign giving audience: —

"Gentlemen, you are welcome."

Pipes and coffee were then brought round in the Eastern fashion, and for some minutes the trio smoked and sipped in silence.

Mr. Melchisedek was the first to speak.

"May I inquire," he said, "which gentleman I am to address as Mr. Trefalden?"

"Myself, if you please," replied Saxon, bluntly.

The Commercial Authority removed his pipe from his lips and looked at him with some appearance of interest.

"I know your name well, Mr. Trefalden," he said. "You came lately into the possession of a fortune founded one hundred years ago."

"I did," replied Saxon, laughingly. "But I hardly expected to find that fact known in Egypt."

"All remarkable financial facts are known among financial men," replied Mr. Melchisedek; "and the fame of the Trefalden legacy has been considerable."

Hereupon he resumed his pipe, and a second round of coffee made its appearance.

Saxon and Castletowers exchanged glances. The semi-oriental gravity of the man, the peculiarities of his appearance, the pacha-like splendour of his palace, and the train of slaves about the place, amazed and amused them.

In obedience to a sign from the Earl, Saxon left Mr. Melchisedek to conduct the conversation according to his own pleasure.

Presently the Nubians removed the coffee-cups and brought round a silver bowl of rose-water and three embroidered napkins. The guests dipped their fingers in the one, and dried them on the others. The slaves then closed the lattices, lit the lamps, and withdrew.

They were no sooner gone than Mr. Melchisedek turned to Saxon and said: —

"If I understand my secretary aright, Mr. Trefalden, you have been informed that an Anglo-Indian Transit Company, calling itself the New Overland Route Company, has lately been established; and you wish to know whether that information be correct?"

"Not precisely," replied Saxon, "for I have reason to know that such a Company has actually been formed; but . . . ."

"May I inquire what that reason is?" said Mr. Melchisedek.

"I have taken shares in it."

"Will you permit me to see one of those shares?"

"I have none — that is to say, they are doubtless in the care of my lawyer. He takes charge of all my papers and transacts all my business."

Mr. Melchisedek looked at Saxon with something like a grim smile hovering about the corners of his mouth, and said in his oracular tone: —

"Sir, there is no such Company."

"But . . . ."

"There is no such Company. All joint-stock companies in England must be publicly registered as the Act directs. They do not exist as companies till that registration has taken place, and, it is only after registration that they become capable of legally carrying on the business for which they are formed, according to the provisions of their deeds of settlement. No such company as this New Overland Route Company has been registered in England or elsewhere — consequently no such company exists."

Saxon changed colour, and was silent.

Mr. Melchisedek touched a silver bell, and the Armenian chamberlain presented himself upon the threshold.

"My volume of maps," said the master laconically.

The Armenian vanished; but presently re-appeared with a huge folio which Mr. Melchisedek opened at the eastern hemisphere.

"Be so good, Mr. Trefalden," said he, "as to show me this supposititious route."

Saxon drew his finger along the map from Marseilles, through the Straits of Messina, to Sidon on the coast of Syria; from Sidon to Palmyra; from Palmyra along the valley of the Euphrates, down the Persian

Gulf and over to Bombay. He explained the scheme as he proceeded. He seemed so brilliant, so easy, so perfect, that before he came to the end of his commentary his tone of voice had become quite triumphant, and all his doubts had vanished.

But the great Commercial Authority only smiled again, more grimly than before.

"You have been grossly imposed upon, Mr. Trefalden," he said. "No engineering establishments such as you describe have been erected here or elsewhere. No corps of engineers has been sent out. No Directors of any such Company are to be found either at Sidon or Bagdad. The whole transaction is less than a bubble — a mere figment of the imagination."

"But may it not be possible that, without your knowledge . . . ."

"No oriental undertaking can be set on foot without my knowledge," replied Mr. Melchisedek, stiffly. "I employ agents throughout the East whose business it is to keep me informed on these subjects."

"Good Heavens!" murmured Saxon; "I do not know how to believe it!"

"Besides," added the Commercial Authority, "the thing is impracticable."

"Why so?"

"In the first place, the obstacles to the Euphrates' route by land are innumerable — perhaps altogether insurmountable. In the second place, Sidon, which is to this scheme what Alexandria is to the genuine route, is one of the most dangerous points of the Syrian coast."

"Is that possible?" exclaimed Saxon. "I have *read of the* harbour of Sidon in Homer — in the Bible

— in ancient and mediæval history. Surely it is the seaport of Damascus?"

"It was," replied Mr. Melchisedek; "but it has not been a seaport for more than two hundred years. When the Emir Fakreddin defended his territory against the encroachments of Amurath the Fourth, he filled the harbour in order to prevent the Turkish fleet from approaching the town. Since that time no vessel of size has dared to attempt an entrance."

Saxon stood bewildered, with his eyes fixed upon the map.

"I fear you have been defrauded to a considerable extent," said Mr. Melchisedek, politely.

"To be defrauded is, I suppose, the lot of the ignorant," replied Saxon; "but it is not so much for the money that I care. It is for the — the . . . ."

"Precisely," said Mr. Melchisedek. "The swindle."

Saxon shrunk from the word as if it stung him.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said hastily.

"Pray do not name it, Mr. Trefalden. I am happy to have been useful to you."

And with this Mr. Melchisedek again touched the silver hand-bell, saluted his visitors in stately fashion, and remained standing till the Armenian had ushered them from his presence.

Back they went again, through the five magnificent rooms, down the marble staircase, now all ablaze with lamps of quaint and beautiful designs, and out across the spacious courtyard.

It was now dusk. A delicious breeze was blowing off the sea; the Frankish quarter was full of promenaders; and a band was playing in the great square before the French *Consulate.*

But Saxon strode on towards the Hôtel de l'Europe, observing nothing; and Castletowers followed him silently. Not till they were again alone in their own sitting-room did he venture to break in upon his friend's meditations.

"I am afraid this is a bad business, Trefalden," he said.

"A terrible business!" replied Saxon, leaning moodily out of the window.

The Earl laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder.

"Is your loss very heavy?" he asked gently.

"Nearly half my fortune."

"Good Heavens, Trefalden!"

Saxon sighed bitterly.

"Yes," he replied; "it is a loss not to be counted by thousands, or tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands — but millions. I have been robbed of two millions."

"But not irrecoverably robbed! You have the law to appeal to!"

"The law can do nothing for me," replied Saxon.

"The law can do everything, if one has prompt recourse to it. Supposing that these swindlers have fled, you can set a hundred detectives at their heels; you can hunt them down like vermin — you can . . . ."

"I tell you, Castletowers, I can do nothing," interrupted Saxon impatiently.

"Why not?"

Saxon was silent.

"Who laid the scheme before you? Who sold you the forged shares?"

Still Saxon made no reply.

A foreboding of the truth flashed suddenly across Lord Castletowers' mind.

"Gracious powers!" he faltered. "Surely — it is not possible — can it be that Mr. Trefalden . . . ."

"Don't ask me!" said Saxon passionately; "don't ask me!"

Then, breaking down all at once, he exclaimed:—

"But, oh, it's not the money, Castletowers! It's not the money that I grieve about!"

"I understand that," replied the Earl, scarcely less agitated than himself. "Who would have conceived that Mr. Trefalden could be so base?"

"My own kinsman — my friend, whom I loved and trusted!"

"The friend whom we all trusted," said the Earl.

Saxon looked at him with an alarmed, almost an imploring, expression — opened his lips, as if to speak — checked himself, and turned away with a heavy sigh.

He had now no doubt that his cousin had wronged Lord Castletowers of that twenty-five thousand pounds; but he could not bring himself to say what he suspected. Besides, there was still a hope . . . .

At all events, he would wait — wait and think.

CHAPTER XXXV.

What to do next.

THERE are some emergencies in which men must and can only turn to their own thoughts for guidance — emergencies in which the least experienced are better able to help themselves than others are to help them; in which the wisest counsel from without is of less value than that counsel which comes from within. Such was Saxon's position when he made the cruel discovery of his cousin's baseness. He was stunned — crushed — bewildered. He neither knew how to act, nor what to think. A change and a shadow seemed all at once to have come over the face of the heavens. That simple faith in his fellow-man which had made wealth so pleasant, life so sweet, the present so sunny, and the future so fair, was shaken suddenly to its foundations. He felt like one who is overtaken by an earthquake. Where his home stood but a moment before, there is now a heap of fallen ruins; where his garden lay, all bright with trees and flowers, there is now but a yawning chasm. He dreads to move, to stand still, to go backward or forward, lest the ground should open and swallow him. There is nothing before him, nothing behind him, but desolation.

As he had told Castletowers in the first outbreak of his trouble, it was not, indeed, "the money" that he lamented. He would have given more than he had lost to believe again in William Trefalden, and know him for "a good man and true." It was not the money. He scarcely thought of it. He was rich without it. Perhaps — for he was beginning to loathe

the wealth which had wrought all this evil — he should have been richer still if he had never possessed it. No — it was that he had, in his simple, manly, hearty way, truly loved his cousin — loved him, looked up to him, trusted him implicitly. It was that he had been, all along, the mere blind victim of a gigantic fraud, deliberately planned, mercilessly carried forward, callously consummated. This was the blow! This was the wrong! This was "the pity of it!"

He had to bear it, to fight through it, to think it out for himself. He had, above all, to consider what he should do next. That was the great problem — what to do next.

For he was determined not to have recourse to the law! He had made up his mind to that from the first. The money might go — was gone, probably. At all events, he would never foul the Trefalden name in a public court, or drag the man whom he had called by the sacred name of "friend" before a public tribunal. At the same time, however, might it not yet be possible to recover some portion of the money. William Trefalden believed him to be in Norway, and doubtless calculated on the three months which Saxon had laid out for his northern trip. Perhaps he had not yet taken flight.

The more Saxon thought about it, the more he became convinced that his wisest course would be to hasten back to London, confront his cousin, and wrest from him whatever might yet be recoverable of the stolen millions. There were great improbabilities in the way; but even in the face of these improbabilities, the effort was worth making.

And then there was the Castletowers mortgage....

but Saxon had already considered how that difficulty might be met.

Poor young fellow! He lay awake all night turning these things over in his mind; and in the morning, as soon as it was day, he went down without even knocking at Lord Castletowers' door as he passed by, and out into the streets.

When he came back to breakfast, his face wore a bright look of decision and purpose.

"I have been down to the landing-place, Castletowers," he said, "looking after the Albula, and making some inquiries of the people about the quays. I think I ought to give up this Mediterranean tour, and go back to England."

"I am sure of it," replied the Earl. "I was about to suggest it to you myself if you had not proposed it."

"And, 'if 'twere well 'twere done, 'twere well 'twere done quickly.'"

"You will go by steamer, of course?"

"I would if I could; but the French steamer left yesterday, and there will be none of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's boats leaving before next week; so the best and only thing to be done is to stick to the yacht for the present. The wind is direct in our favour; the Albula will skim along like a gull; and by pushing forward at once to Malta, we may catch one of the Italian boats. At all events, we shall not be standing still; and even to be moving is something, when one is so intolerably restless."

"I am ready to start with you this very moment," said the Earl.

"Thank you," replied Saxon, with a sigh. "You

must come back here, you know, when you have got rid of me, and go on to Cairo and the Pyramids, as we had intended before this happened."

"Without you?"

"Why not? I shall, of course, leave the yacht in your charge."

The Earl shook his head.

"No, no, Trefalden," he said. "The yacht can be sent home in the care of the master; but you and I must certainly not part company unless you feel you had rather be without me."

"That's impossible; but . . . ."

"But me no buts. Solitary travelling has no charm for me. If you reject my society, I shall simply go home to Castletowers as fast as I can."

So it was agreed that the friends should embark without an hour's delay, making direct for the nearest port in which a Marseilles steamer was likely to be found.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Homeward Bound.

THAT fate is always adverse to a man in haste; that nothing important in this world is ever to be had at the precise moment when it is most needed; that the train is certain to be half-an-hour late or the watch ten minutes slow, when every moment is more precious than gold and one's whole being seems to be concentrated on the one act of pushing forward — are facts which call for no evidence beyond that which comes within the circle of each man's experience.

In obedience, then, to what may be called the Law of Hindrances, the Albula just missed the steamer at Valetta by an hour and three-quarters. Being told, however, that by running before the wind to Messina without delay, they would be certain to catch the French mail steam-packet for Marseilles direct, the travellers crowded all sail, and went on. Arrived at Messina, they learned that this boat had started at noon, and that no other would be due till that day week. There was now nothing for it but to go on to Naples.

But the wind was no longer directly in their favour, and their progress was consequently so much the slower. After tacking laboriously along the Calabrian coast, they at length beheld all that wondrous panorama which surrounds the Gulf of Salerno unfold itself before them as they passed — Pæstum, Amalfi, Salerno, Vesuvius, and, at last, the glorious bay, with its sentinel islets lying out to sea.

They landed at the Molo Grande. The white flag of the Bourbon was flying from the twin castles down beside the quays, from the arsenal, and from the mast-heads of the steam-frigates in the harbour. There, pacing to-and-fro upon the pier, were the Neapolitan sentries with their white cross-belts — those same cross-belts at which Saxon and Castletowers fired so many shots at Melazzo.

They soon found that the boat which they had missed at Messina was, above all others, the one which they should have taken. No other went to Marseilles direct, and no other would go at all for at least forty-eight hours, from the time of their arrival in the harbour. It was now Thursday morning, and the order

of departure was as follows: there was the boat of the Messageries Impériales, which left Naples every Tuesday at 5 P.M.; there was the boat of the Two Sicilies Mail Steam Navigation Company, which went every Wednesday at the same hour; and there were two other boats every Saturday, besides the chance of a merchant steamer, which had no fixed dates for departure, but was expected to be ready about that time. But every one of these steamers, without exception, touched at Civita Vecchia, and some touched not only at Civita Vecchia, but also at Genoa and Leghorn.

In short, they could not possibly get off before Saturday at noon, and even then must suffer loss of time by putting in at the papal port by the way.

However, there was no help for it. Wait one whole day and part of two others, they must; so they determined to make the delay as pleasant as possible, and the Earl undertook to show Saxon all that could be seen of Naples in the time.

How they rattled down to Pompeii by rail; dined on the Chiaja; heard the "Barbière" at the San Carlo; supped in the open air on the terrace of the Albergo della Villa di Roma: ate mattoni ices and maccaroni to their heart's content; and wandered on the Molo, watching the red glow above Vesuvius long after those hours at which more reasonable travellers are in their beds — needs no recapitulation here.

To a stranger, the fair city seemed all careless security, all mirth, all holiday. Who that knew not every inflection of the popular voice, every flash of the popular humour, could have guessed that there was revolt at the heart of that shouting, laughing, noisy crowd? Who would have dreamed that the preacher

holding forth in the Largo del Mercato was only kept from preaching the "movimento" by the sight of those crossbelts scattered, as if by chance, among the crowd? Or that the Canta Storia on the Molo, chanting his monotonous stanzas to an eager circle of boatmen and lazzaroni, was ready to substitute the name of Garibaldi for that of Rinaldo whenever the sentry was out of hearing? Who would have supposed that in every coffee-shop and trattoria; round every lemonade and maccaroni stall, in front of every mountebank's platform, and in the porch of every church, the one prevailing, absorbing topic upon every lip was the advance of the national army?

Yet so it was. Garibaldi had crossed from Sicily, and landed in Calabria only a few days before, and all Naples was boiling over with hope and exultation. The wildest tales, the most extravagant anticipations were afloat. Every man whispered "Viva Garibaldi!" in his neighbour's ear; but none had yet dared to give voice to the popular watchword. In the meanwhile, an irrepressible under-current of revolutionary propagandism was beginning to agitate the surface of Neapolitan life. Though not yet apparent to the casual observer, this disposition was perfectly understood by the Neapolitan authorities, who were doing all in their power to keep it down by means of the strong hand. The guns of St. Elmo, the Castel Nuovo, and the Castel dell' Ovo were pointed ominously upon the town. Small bodies of military were constantly perambulating the principal thoroughfares, mingling in every crowd, and loitering about the places of popular resort. Above all, the little theatre San Carlino, in the Largo del Castello, was shut up. Saxon and Castletowers had

gone down there on their way to the opera, intending to pay a visit to Pulichinello; but they found the doors closed, and a sentry pacing before them. That witty and patriotic puppet had fallen a victim to his political opinions, and was now a state prisoner in his own little theatre.

Such was the condition of Naples when Saxon made his first acquaintance with the beautiful city. The king was still at the Palazzo Reale, the people were in a ferment, and Garibaldi was on the march.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Colonna's Hand.

They were going up Vesuvius.

Happy youth, which can forget its cares so easily, and float with every tide! Here were two young men snatching a hasty breakfast on the terrace in front of their hotel, while the carriage which was to convey them to Resina waited at the door. They had risen with the sun; they were in high spirits; they talked more than they ate, and laughed more than either. Who would have supposed that the one had been robbed of half his fortune and the other rejected by the lady of his love? Who would have supposed that each had a real sorrow at heart? And, above all, who would not covet that healthy elasticity of temper which enabled them to put their troubles aside, and make the best of the sunshiny present?

"Confound the arm!" said the Earl. "I don't know how I am to get up the cone without the help of it!"

"You must be carried," replied Saxon, vigorously attacking a fragrant "bifteck," surrounded by a golden fence of "pommes de terre frites." "It's expensive and ignominious; but I can suggest nothing better."

"Consent to become a parcel!" exclaimed the Earl. "Never. Am I not a man and a biped?"

"Men and bipeds must occasionally do what they don't like, I presume, as well as women and quadrupeds," replied Saxon.

"There is one consolatory fact of which I am quite certain," replied the Earl; "and that is that men and bipeds have the best of the bargain — at all events, in this world."

"Not a doubt of it. What splendid stuff this Lachryma is!"

"There's a poor wretch down there, however, who looks as if his worldly bargain had been bad enough!" said the Earl, tossing a handful of carlini to a beggar who had been mumbling and bowing in the road below, ever since the young men had sat down to breakfast.

The waiter in attendance shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"*Son' tutti ladroni, signore,*" said he. "*Tutti — tutti!*"

The beggar picked up the coins with a great show of gratitude, and called upon a variety of saints to shower down blessings on the giver.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Saxon, setting down the glass which he had just raised to his lips.

The Earl looked up in surprise.

"Why, my good fellow," said he, "what is the matter with you? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

But, instead of replying, Saxon turned to the waiter.

"Bring me a cup of strong coffee," he said. "Bring it immediately."

The waiter withdrew. Saxon at once laid his hand on his friend's arm, leaned closer to him, and said in a hurried whisper: —

"It's Signor Montecuculi — that Montecuculi whom I saw once at Castletowers!"

"Montecuculi! Where? What do you mean?"

"There — the beggar yonder — don't you see? He has something to say to us!"

"But are you certain?"

"Certain. I saw his face quite plainly. Ha! What's this?"

The beggar had withdrawn a little into the shade of the roadside trees; but a stone came whirring through the air, and crashed down, as Saxon spoke, into the midst of the breakfast-table. There was a paper twisted about it, which the Earl had barely time to secure before the waiter came back. As soon as that functionary could be again dismissed, the young men hastened to examine it.

"Colonna's hand!" exclaimed the Earl, as his eyes fell on the writing.

There were but three or four lines, and they ran thus: —

"*In great peril. Concealed near the coast. Enemies on the alert. Bring a sailing boat. Anchor off shore in a line with the ruins of Cumæ. Be prepared with a row-boat, and look out for signals about dusk.*"

"How lucky that we were detained here!" was Saxon's first exclamation.

"We must not think of Vesuvius now," said the Earl.

"Of course not!"

"We can say that we have changed our minds and prefer a day on the water. It will be easy to cruise about the coast in that direction, fishing, or sketching."

"Nothing easier."

"And we'll get him off, somehow!"

"That we will, in spite of Francesco Secondo!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Orthodox British Tourists.

The Albula coasted ostentatiously about the bay all the forenoon, but shortly after midday rounded Monte Procida, and cast anchor at the point indicated in Colonna's note.

Her crew was now strengthened by the addition of a small, active, swarthy Italian sailor, with gold rings in his ears, and a scarlet cap upon his head. He was an "odd hand" whom Saxon had, apparently, picked up upon the quay; and he had not been on board five minutes before he betrayed his utter incapacity to handle a rope. This sailor was Montecuculi.

Himself proscribed and in hourly peril of recognition, he had been for three days vainly trying to get Colonna off from his hiding place at Cumæ. Finding it impossible, in consequence of the vigilance of the harbour police, to make the attempt by sea, he was in the act of organising an armed expedition by land, when he heard that an English yacht had just come

into port. Going down himself after dark, he found to his great joy that the Albula was Saxon Trefalden's property, and that Lord Castletowers was with him at the Hotel Gran' Bretagna.

"I tried to see you last evening," said he, as they leaned, chatting, over the side of the vessel; "but though I heard of you at many places, I could find you at none. This morning, however, I was determined not to be baffled; so I have been hanging about the Chiaja ever since daybreak."

"It was an act of great imprudence on Colonna's part, to venture over to the mainland before Garibaldi was in Naples," said the Earl.

"Imprudence! It was madness. Nothing less. I have been in Naples myself for the last three weeks, attending the meetings of our secret societies, and distributing the Dictator's proclamations; but then I am known only to our own people, and there is no price upon my head. I heard some days ago that Colonna had been seen at Gaeta; but I did not believe it."

"At Gaeta!" repeated the Earl. "Nay, what could he expect, save danger, in a royalist stronghold like Gaeta?"

"What, indeed! *Ma che volete?* He has been running his head into the lion's mouth all his life."

"Heaven grant that he may not have done so once too often."

"Were it not that no hand on earth could imitate his writing," said Montecuculi, "I should have suspected a trap; but of the genuineness of his note there can be no doubt."

"How did it reach you?" asked the Earl.

"It was left for me, somewhat mysteriously, at the

little trattoria where I dine. The messenger was a boy whom nobody knew, and he merely gave it in without a word, and ran away."

"But what was Signor Colonna doing at Gaeta?" asked Saxon.

The Italian shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Garibaldi has only to enter Naples by one gate for Francesco to walk out by the other," replied he; "and Gaeta gave shelter to the Pope ten years ago. It is a difficult place to deal with, and, of course, if it *could* be gained over beforehand, our position would be materially strengthened. But Colonna was not the man for such an expedition. A less precious life should have been hazarded."

"I wonder where he is now!" said the Earl, taking an anxious survey of the coast through his glass.

"I think I can guess," replied Montecuculi. "You see that volcanic hill, lying back yonder from the shore? That is the Acropolis of Cumæ; and a regiment might find hiding-room in the mysterious caves and passages with which it is perforated in every direction."

"I think I can see them," exclaimed Saxon. "They look like rabbit burrows."

"There are hundreds of them — all hewn in the solid tufa. They were ancient beyond all record in the time of Virgil; and no one knows whither they lead, or by what hands they were excavated."

It was now proposed that Saxon and Castletowers should land, on pretext of sketching, leaving the Albula at anchor about half a mile from shore. They put off accordingly in the small boat, taking one of Saxon's English sailors with them, and leaving Montecuculi on board the yacht.

The shore was flat and marshy, fringed with tall reeds, and scattered over with fragments of very ancient masonry. Among these reeds they moored their boat, and landing, found themselves face to face with a Neapolitan sentry.

Up till this moment no human creature had been visible along the lonely coast. Scanning it carefully from the deck of the Albula and detecting no sign of life for miles on either side, they had said to each other that nothing would be easier than to bring off the fugitive in open day; yet no sooner had they set foot upon the sand than their friend's danger stood bodily before them in the shape of an armed sentinel.

The man neither challenged them nor opposed their landing; but stood by, leaning on his musket, quiet and observant. Saxon and Castletowers, on the other hand, with an air of the utmost unconcern, lit their cigars, and began looking about for a favourable point of view.

Presently the Earl went up to the sentry, and addressed him.

"*Scusate, amico*," said he, "but what hill is that yonder?"

"*E la rocca di Cumæ, signore*," replied the soldier.

"*Cumæ?*" repeated the Earl.

"*Si, signore. Cumæ antico.*"

"*Grazie molte*," said Castletowers, and immediately pulled a book from his pocket, and began reading. The book was Childe Harold; but the last edition of Murray could not have answered his purpose better. The sentry concluded it was a guide-book, set down the new comers as inoffensive tourists, and took no further notice of them.

They then wandered a little way up the shore till they came to a clump of pines, in the shade of which they sat down. Here Saxon, who was in truth no artist, proceeded to make a sketch.

Presently another sentry made his appearance. Like the first, he seemed to rise out of the very earth, and yet made no show of watchfulness. Having paced slowly past the pine-clump twice or thrice, he withdrew to a point of rising ground about a quarter of a mile distant, and there took up his position.

"Trefalden," said the Earl, "we are watched."

"Evidently."

"What is to be done?"

"Heaven knows!"

"It is my belief that the place swarms with soldiers."

"And I feel as if the very air were full of eyes and ears."

"Poor Colonna!"

Then, for a few moments, they were both silent.

"I'll tell you what I think we must do, Castletowers," said Saxon. "Seem to sail away, and then come back again at dusk."

Despite his anxiety, the Earl could not forbear a smile.

"Decidedly, my friend," said he, "you have no genius for intrigue."

"Isn't my plan a good one?"

"It is the most artless artifice that ever oozed from an honest brain. No, no. We must do something much more cunning than that."

"Then I fear you will have to invent it."

"I think I have done so already. You must go on

sketching for a few hours longer. We must then pretend to be hungry . . . ."

"No need for pretence on my part," said Saxon; "I am frightfully hungry now."

"You will have to fast for some time, then; because it is my object to prolong our stay here till dusk, and, in order to do that, we must drive off the dinner question to the last moment. Having done this we will go up boldly to one of the sentries, inquire our way to the nearest inn, and get something to eat. By the time we have dined it will be dusk. Colonna will then only have to steal down to the shore and hide himself in our boat; and the object for which we are here will be triumphantly accomplished."

"It seems to me," said Saxon, "that we should have done better had we followed Colonna's own instructions more closely, and not come till after sunset."

The Earl shook his head.

"Our only course," he replied, "was to land openly, to sketch, and idle, and play the orthodox British tourist. By doing this, we disarm suspicion; by stealing along the coast after sunset, we should infallibly have aroused the attention of every royalist within half-a-dozen miles of the place."

"I daresay you are right," said Saxon; "but in the meanwhile I am starving."

"I fear you must continue to starve for the present."

"Then I beg you to understand that I decline to sit still under the treatment. Suppose we go over the ruins."

"Will you not finish your sketch first?"

"My sketch!" ejaculated Saxon, contemptuously.

"Pshaw! my sketches are the most unsatisfactory daubs in the world. The more I finish them, the worse they get. If I had put this down half-an-hour ago, it would have been ever so much better than it is now."

The Earl still hesitated. Not knowing where Colonna might be hidden, he doubted whether they ought to go up to the ruins or not. At last they decided that orthodox British tourists would be certain to see all that could be seen; and so went across the broiling plain and up to the foot of the Cumæan Mount. Arrived, however, at the Arco Felice, they were met by a third sentry, who interposed his bayonet somewhat unceremoniously between them and the gate. The ruins, he said, were closed to the public, and could only be seen by order of the Royal Chamberlain.

They tried expostulation, they tried bribery, but in vain. The man was immoveable. So Saxon had to make another sketch, and then another, to pass the time away.

At length the day began to decline, and the Earl judged that they might proceed to the second step in their plan. So they went back to the sentinel at the Arco Felice, and inquired if he knew where they might purchase something to eat.

The soldier shrugged his shoulders, and believed there was no albergo nearer than Patria.

"How far are we from Patria?" asked the Earl.

"About eight miles."

"Eight miles! But, amico, we have not eaten since breakfast — we are starving. Is there no farm-house near at hand?"

"*Oh, sicuro.* There is a *podere* about a quarter of an hour hence."

"In which direction?"

"Following the coast-road towards Liternum."

"A thousand thanks! Good evening, amico."

"*Buona sera, signore.*"

With this, the young men turned away, and hastened in the direction indicated.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Cry of the Chiù.

THEIR path lay down by the shore, and the sun was low before they reached the house of which they were in search. It was a large, rambling, half-ruinous place, with the discoloured plaster all scaling away from the walls, an old stone trough standing out in the road close by, and bundles of stored hay and straw sticking out through the shutterless windows of the basement story. A few half-starved oxen were lying about on the scant sward behind the house; a cock strutted on the dunghill before the door; and two sickly looking women plied their distaffs under the shade of a vine in a crazy little *pergoletta*, overlooking the sea.

These women dropped their work with alacrity when accosted by Lord Castletowers, and hastened to provide the travellers with such poor fare as the place afforded. And it was poor enough. An omelette, a loaf of rye bread, a plate of salted fish, and a little fruit, was all they had to offer; but Saxon and Castletowers had not fasted all day for nothing. They feasted as heartily as if their table had been spread in the best hotel in Naples, and emptied a bottle of the thinnest

country wine with as keen a gusto as if it had been "long imprisoned Cœcuban" or "fiery Falerian."

When at length they had eaten and drunk and were satisfied, and had recompensed the good women of the house for their hospitality, it was quite dusk — the magical dusk of an early autumn evening in south Italy, when the earth is folded to rest in a deep and tender gloom which scarcely seems like night, and the grass is alight with glow-worms, and the air kindling with fireflies, and the sky one vast mosaic of stars.

The difficult part of their undertaking was now at hand. Even in traversing the coast-road between the *podere* and that point where their boat lay moored, they had to exercise all the discretion of which they were masters. It was important that they should neither attract, nor seem to avoid, observation. They had to tread lightly, without risking the appearance of caution; to walk neither slow nor fast; to avail themselves of the shelter of every rock, and wall, and bush along the road, and yet not to seem as if they were creeping in the shade; and, above all, to keep open eyes and ears and silent tongues, for fear of surprise.

Going along thus, they soon left the solitary *podere* behind. There was no moon; but the darkness was strangely transparent, and the mountainous outlines of the twin islands, Ischia and Procida, were distinctly visible on the far horizon. Where the languid sea just glided to the shore, a shifting phosphorescent gleam faintly came and went upon the margin of the sands; and presently, lying a little off, with her sails all furled like the folded wings of a sleeping bird, the Albula came dimly into sight.

They paused. All was profoundly quiet. Scarce

a breath disturbed the perfect stillness of sea and shore. Now and then a faint shiver seemed to run through the tall reeds down by the water's edge; but that was all. Had a pebble fallen, the young men must have heard it where they stood.

"I don't believe there's a living soul on this beach but ourselves," whispered Saxon.

"Heaven grant it!" replied the Earl, in the same tone.

"What shall we do next?"

"I think we cannot do better than go down to the boat, and there lie in readiness for whatever may happen."

They found the boat just where they had left it six or seven hours before, and their sailor lying in it at full length, fast asleep. Without rousing him, they crouched down in the shelter of the reeds, and waited.

"You have your revolver, Trefalden?" whispered the Earl.

"Yes, in my hand."

"And you can pull an oar if necessary?"

"Of course."

The Earl sighed impatiently.

"This cursed arm," said he, "renders me more helpless than a woman. Hush! did you hear a footstep on the sand?"

"No; I heard nothing."

"Listen."

They listened breathlessly; but all was still, like death.

"There is something awful in the silence," said Saxon.

"I wish to Heaven we knew what the signal would be," muttered the Earl.

And then they lay a long time without speaking or moving.

"I feel as if my limbs were ossifying," whispered the Earl, by-and-by.

"And I never longed so much in my life to do something noisy," replied Saxon. "I am at this moment possessed by an almost irresistible impulse to shout 'Viva Garibaldi!' Hush! what's that?"

It was a faint, plaintive, distant cry like nothing that the mountaineer had ever heard before; but the Earl recognised it immediately,

"It is only the chiù," said he.

"The what?"

"The chiù — a little summer owl, common throughout Italy. I almost wonder we have not heard it before; though, to be sure, the season is somewhat advanced."

"The creature has an unearthly note," said Saxon. "There! I heard it again."

"It seems to be coming this way," said Castletowers.

He had scarcely spoken, when the melancholy call floated towards them for the third time. Saxon dropped his hand suddenly upon his friend's shoulder.

"That is no owl's cry," he whispered. "It is a human voice. I would stake my life on it."

"No, no."

"I tell you, yes. It is the signal."

The Earl would not believe it; but Saxon imitated the note and it was echoed immediately.

"There," said he," I told you so."

"Nonsense; all owls will do that. I have made them answer me hundreds of times."

But Saxon pointed eagerly forward.

"Look!" he said; "look, close under that wall yonder. Don't you see something moving?"

The Earl stared into the darkness as if he would pierce through it.

"I think I do," he replied; "a something — a shadow!"

"Shall we not show ourselves?"

"Suppose it is a sentry!"

"It is no sentry."

"Try the cry again."

Saxon tried the cry again, and again it was promptly echoed. He immediately roused the sleeping seaman and stepped out cautiously beyond the shelter of the reeds.

As he did so, the shadow under the wall became stationary.

Then he listened, advanced a few paces, treading so lightly and swiftly that the sand scarcely grated under his feet; and, having traversed about half the intermediate distance, came to a halt.

He had no sooner halted, than the shadow was seen to move again, and steal a few yards nearer.

And now Saxon, watching the approaching form with eyes trained to darkness and distance, was struck with a sudden conviction that it was not Colonna. As this doubt flashed through his mind, the shadow stopped again, and a low, distinct, penetrating whisper came to him on the air: —

"*Chi é?*"

To which Saxon, quick as thought, replied: —

"Montecuculi."

Instantly the shadow lifted its head, cried aloud,

"chiù! chiù! chiù!" three times in succession, and, leaving the gloom of the wall, came running up to Saxon where he stood. It was not Colonna, but a slight active boy clad in some kind of loose blouse.

"All's well," he said in Italian. "Where is your boat?"

"Close at hand."

"Is all ready?"

"All."

"Quick, then! He will be here instantly."

They ran to the boat. The lad jumped in, the sailor grasped his oars, Castletowers kept watch, and Saxon stood ready to shove off.

Then followed a moment of anxious suspense.

Suddenly the sharp, stinging report of a rifle rang through the silence. The boy uttered a half-suppressed cry, and made as if he would fling himself from the boat; but Saxon, with rough kindness, thrust him back.

"You young fool!" said he, authoritatively, "sit still."

At the same moment they beheld the gleam of a distant torch, heard a rush of rapid footfalls on the beach, and saw a man running down wildly towards the sea.

Saxon darted out to meet him.

"Courage!" he cried. "This way."

But the fugitive, instead of following, staggered and stood still.

"I cannot," he gasped. "I am exhausted. Save yourselves."

A tossing fire of torches was now visible not a couple of hundred yards away in the direction of Cumæ,

and more than one bullet came whistling over the heads of those on the beach.

In the meanwhile Saxon had taken Colonna up bodily in his arms, and strode with him to the boat like a young giant.

As he did this, a yell of discovery broke from the lips of the pursuers. On they came, firing and shouting tumultuously; but only in time to see the boat shoved off, and to find a broad gap of salt water between themselves and their prey.

"Viva Garibaldi!" shouted Saxon, firing his revolver triumphantly in their faces.

But the lad in the blouse snatched it from his hand.

"Give me the pistol," he said, "and help with the oars. How can we tell that they have no boat at hand?"

The boy now spoke in English, but Saxon scarcely noticed that in the overwhelming excitement of the moment. The voice, however, sounded strangely familiar, and had a ring of authority in it that commanded obedience. Saxon relinquished the weapon instantly, and flung himself upon his oars. The boy, heedless of the bullets that came pattering into the water all about their wake, leaned over the gunwale and discharged the whole round of cartridges. The soldiers on the beach, looking gaunt and shadowy by the waving torchlight, fired a parting volley. In the meanwhile the boat bounded forward under the double impulse, and in a few more seconds they were, if not beyond range, at all events beyond aim in the darkness.

CHAPTER XL.

A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sail.

PULLING swiftly and strongly, the rowers threw a fierce energy into their work that soon left the reedy shore far enough behind. Each moment the glare of the torchlight grew fainter on the shore. Each moment the hull of the Albula seemed to become bigger and blacker. In the meanwhile no one spoke. The boy, having fired out all Saxon's cartridges, crept to Colonna's side and there crouched silently. The Italian had sunk exhausted in the bottom of the boat, and lay with his head and shoulders leaning up against the side; Castletowers steered, and the two others bent and rose upon their oars with the precision of automatons.

Presently they shot alongside the yacht and were hailed by the familiar voice of Saxon's honest master. Then a light flashed overhead, a rope was thrown and caught, a ladder lowered, and in a few seconds they were all on board.

"Thank Heaven, you're safe!" exclaimed Lord Castletowers, turning to Colonna as soon as his foot touched the deck.

But the Italian leaned heavily upon his shoulder, and whispered: —

"Hush! Take me below. I am wounded."

"Wounded?"

"Not so loud, I implore you — not a word here!"

"But not badly?"

"I don't know — I fear so."

"Good God, Colonna!"

The crew were busy hauling in the boat and unfurling the sails. Even the boy and Montecuculi were doing what they could to help; for life and liberty depended now upon the speed with which they could put the yacht before what little breeze was blowing. They must get away, no matter in what direction. It was the one vital, imperative, overruling necessity.

Under cover of the haste and confusion on deck, Lord Castletowers helped his friend down the cabin-stairs, assisted him to the sofa, struck a light, and hastened to examine his wound.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked eagerly.

"Lock the door first."

Wondering somewhat at the request, the Earl obeyed. Then Colonna with his own hands opened the bosom of his shirt, and Castletowers saw that he was wounded just above the left breast, about an inch below the collar bone. The spot where the ball had penetrated was surrounded by a broad purple margin; but there was very little blood, and scarcely any laceration of the flesh.

"It does not look so bad," said the Earl; "and seems scarcely to have bled at all."

"It is bleeding inwardly," replied Colonna, feebly. "Give me a little brandy."

The Earl hesitated.

"I am not sure that you ought to have it," he said.

"I must have it — I — I . . . ."

His voice faltered, and a ghastly look came upon his pallid face.

"I will call Montecuculi," said the Earl, with a

throb of sudden, undefined terror. "He understands these things better than I do."

Colonna half raised himself upon the couch.

"No, no," he gasped; "wait — do not alarm . . . ."

Then, making a desperate effort to articulate, he pointed to his throat and fell back insensible.

At this moment some one tried the cabin door on the outside, and, finding it bolted, knocked loudly on the panels.

The Earl rushed to open it.

"Run," he cried, seeing the boy whom they had just brought off from shore; "fetch some cold water — call Signor Montecuculi! Quick — the Colonna is badly wounded, and has fainted away!"

But the lad, instead of obeying, thrust the Earl aside, uttered a piercing cry, and flung himself upon his knees beside the sofa.

"My father!" sobbed he, passionately. "Oh, my father!"

Lord Castletowers drew back, full of amazement and pity.

"Alas!" he said, in a low tremulous tone. "Miss Colonna!"

In the meanwhile, those on deck were moving heaven and earth to put as many miles of sea as might be possible between the yacht and the coast. The breeze was languid and fitful; but such as it was, they spread their sails to it, and by standing first on one tack, then on the other, made some little progress.

By degrees the shadowy outline of the hills faded away in the darkness, and shortly after midnight a brisk south-west wind sprung up, as if on purpose for their service.

All that night they ran before the breeze, making close upon fifteen knots an hour, and bearing right away for Corsica. All that night Giulio Colonna lay in the little cabin below the deck of the Albula, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, passing from fainting fit to fainting fit, and growing hourly weaker.

CHAPTER XLI.

"The Noblest Roman of them all."

PALE, silent, unwearied, Olimpia sat beside her father's couch through all the hours of that weary night, wiping the cold dews from his brow, bathing his wound, and watching over him with a steady composure that never faltered. Sometimes when he moaned, she shuddered; but that was all.

Towards dawn, the Earl beckoned Saxon quietly away, and they went up on deck. The morning was now grey above their heads and there was no land in sight. The breeze had dropped with the dawn, and the Albula was again making but little way. Both sea and sky looked inexpressibly dreary.

"How does he seem now?" asked Montecuculi, hastening towards them.

The Earl shook his head.

"Sinking slowly, I fear," he replied. "The fainting fits are longer each time, and each time leave him weaker. The last endured for twenty-seven minutes, and he has not spoken since."

The Ferrarese threw up his hands despairingly.

"*Dio!*" he exclaimed; "that it should end thus!"

"And that it should end now," added Castletowers.

"Now, when the great work is so nearly accomplished, and the hour of his reward was close at hand!"

"How does the signora bear it?"

"Like a Colonna — nobly."

"I will go down and share her watch while you remain on deck. It is something to look upon him while he is yet alive."

With this the young Italian stole gently down the cabin stairs, leaving Saxon and Castletowers alone.

"Alas! Trefalden," said the Earl, after a long silence, "this is a calamitous dawn for Italy."

"Do you not think he will live the day out?"

"I think that he is going fast. I do not expect to hear him speak again in this world — I scarcely expect to see him alive at noon."

"If we had only kept that surgeon with us one week longer!"

"Aye — if we had!"

"Poor Olimpia!"

"Poor Olimpia, indeed! I dread to think of all she has yet to suffer."

And they were silent again.

"I cannot conceive what we are to do, Trefalden, when — when it is all over," said Lord Castletowers, presently.

"Nor I."

"He ought to rest with his own people; and it must be my task to convey his poor remains to Rome; but, in the meanwhile, what is to become of her?"

"I can escort her to England."

"Impossible, my dear fellow! You have not the time to travel slowly. You ought, even now, to be

night and day upon the road; and, do what you will, may still be in London too late!"

"Stay," replied Saxon quickly; "I can suggest a plan. I know of two ladies — English ladies — who are now residing at Nice. My cousin knows them well; and if Miss Colonna would consent to accept their protection till such time as you had returned from Rome, and could take her to Castletowers . . . ."

"An excellent idea, Trefalden — nothing could be better!"

At this moment Montecuculi came back, anxious and agitated.

"You had better come down," he said, in a low, awe-struck tone. "I think he is dying."

"So soon!"

"Indeed, I fear it."

They went. Colonna still lay as when they saw him last, with his head supported against a pile of pillows and a blanket thrown across his feet and knees; but it needed no second glance to see that a great change had taken place within the last half-hour. A ghastly, grey hue had spread itself over his face; his eyes seemed to have sunk away into two cavernous hollows; and his very hands were livid. For two hours he had not moved hand or foot. For more than two hours he had not spoken. His heart still beat; but so feebly, that its action could with difficulty be detected by the ear, and not at all by the hand. He still breathed; but the lungs did their work so languidy, and at such long intervals, that a stranger would have taken him for one quite dead. Now and then, not oftener than once in every fifteen or twenty minutes, a slight spasmodic shudder, like the momentary ruffling

of still waters, passed over him as he lay; but of this, as of all else, he was profoundly unconscious.

"Has he moaned of late?" asked Lord Castletowers.

Olimpia, with one of her father's cold hands pressed between her own, and her eyes intently fixed upon his face, shook her head silently.

"Nor moved?"

She shook her head again.

After this, the Earl stood for a long while looking down upon the face of his early friend. As he did so, his eyes filled with tears, and his heart with sorrowful memories — memories of days long gone by, and incidents till now forgotten. He saw himself again a boy at Colonna's knee. He remembered boyish pleasures promoted and vacation rambles shared. He thought of classic readings under summer trees; of noble things said, and done, and hoped for; of high and heroic counsel solemnly given; of privations uncomplainingly endured; of aspirations crushed; of arduous labour unrecompensed; of a patriotism which, however mistaken in many of its aims, was as gallant and ardent as that of "the noblest Roman of them all." Remembering these things — remembering, too, the open hand, the fearless heart, the unstained honour which had characterised the dying man in every relation and act of his unselfish life, the Earl felt as if he had never done justice to his virtues till this moment.

"Alas, poor Italy!" he said, aloud: and the tears that had been slowly gathering in his eyes, began to fall.

But at that word — that omnipotent word, which for so many years had ruled the beatings of his heart, coloured his every thought, and shaped his every pur-

pose — a kind of strange and sudden thrill swept over Colonna's face. A livid mask but the instant before, it now seemed as if lighted from within. His eyelids quivered, his lips moved, and a faint sound was audible in his throat.

"Oh, God!" cried Olimpia, flinging herself upon her knees beside him; "he is about to speak!"

The Earl held up his hand, in token of silence.

At that moment the dying man opened his eyes, and a rapt, radiant, wonderful smile came upon all his face, like a glory.

"Italia!" he whispered; "Italia!"

The smile remained; but only the smile. Not the breath — not the spirit — not Giulio Colonna.

CHAPTER XLII.

O Bella Età dell' Oro.

CAREWORN and intent, his lips pressed nervously together, his brow contracted, his eyes, hand, and pen, all travelling swiftly in concert, William Trefalden bent over his desk, working against time, against danger, against fate. All that day long and half the night before, he had been sitting in the same place, labouring at the same task, and his work was now drawing to a close. Piles of letters, papers, memoranda, deeds, and account-books crowded the table. A waste-paper basket, full to overflowing, was placed to the left of Mr. Trefalden's chair, and a large cash-box to the right of his desk. Although it was only the fifteenth of September, and the warm evening sunlight was pouring in through the open window, a fire burned

in the grate. The fragments clinging to the bars and the charred tinder heap below, indicated plainly enough for what purpose that fire had been kindled.

The sun sank lower and lower. The sullen roar of the great neighbouring thoroughfare rose and fell, and never ceased. The drowsy city clocks, roused up for a few moments and grown suddenly garrulous, chimed the quarters every now and then, and, having discharged that duty, dozed off again directly. Then the last glow faded from the house-tops, and the pleasant twilight — pleasant even in City streets and stifling offices — came gently over all.

Still Mr. Trefalden worked on; his eager pen now flying over the page, now arrested at the base of a column of figures, now laid aside for several minutes at a time. Methodically, resolutely, rapidly, the lawyer pursued his task; and it was a task both multifarious and complicated, demanding all the patience of which he was master. He had told his clerks that he was going out of town for six weeks, and was putting his papers in order before starting; but it was not so. He was going away, far away, never to set foot in that office again. He was turning his back upon London, upon England, upon his cousin Saxon, for ever and ever.

He had intended to do this weeks before. His plans had been all matured long enough in advance. He was to have been in Madeira, perhaps many an ocean-league farther still, by this time; but fate had gone against him, and here, on the fifteenth of September, he was yet in London.

Mrs. Rivière was dead. They had believed her to be gaining strength at Sydenham, and she had seemed

to be so much better that the very day was fixed for their journey to Liverpool, when, having committed some trifling imprudence, she caught a severe cold, fell dangerously ill, and, after lingering some three or four weeks, died passively in her sleep, like a sick child. This event it was that delayed William Trefalden from his flight. He chafed, he wearied, he burned to be gone — but in vain; for he loved Helen Rivière — loved her with all the depth and passion that were in him; and, so loving her, could no more have left her in her extremity of grief and apprehension than he could have saved her mother from the grave. So he waited and waited on, week after week, till Mrs. Rivière was one day laid to rest in a sheltered corner of Norwood Cemetery. By this time September had come, and he well knew that there was danger for him in every rising of the sun. He knew that Saxon might come back, that the storm might burst and overwhelm him, at any moment. So he hurried on his final preparations with feverish haste, and thus, on the evening of the fifteenth, was winding up his accounts, ready to take flight on the morrow.

Now he untied a bundle of documents, and, having glanced rapidly at their endorsements, consigned them, unread, to the waste-paper basket. Now he opened a packet of letters, which he immediately tore up into countless fragments, thrust into the heart of the dull fire, and watched as they burned away. Deeds, copies of deeds, accounts, letters, returned cheques, and miscellaneous papers of every description were thus disposed of in quick succession, some being given to the flames and some to the basket. At length, when table and safe were both thoroughly cleared and the twilight

had deepened into dusk, Mr. Trefalden lit his office-lamp, refreshed himself with a draught of cold water, and sat down once more to his desk.

This time, he had other and pleasanter work on hand.

He drew the cash-box towards him, plunged his hands into it with a sort of eager triumph, and ranged its contents before him on the table. Those contents were of various kinds — paper, gold, and precious stones. Paper of various colours and various qualities, thick, thin, semitransparent, blueish, yellowish, and white; gold in rouleaux; and precious stones in tiny canvas bags tied at the mouth with red tape. Money — all money, or that which was equivalent to money!

For a moment William Trefalden leaned back in his chair and surveyed his treasure. It was a great fortune, a splendid fortune, a fortune carried off, as it were, at the sword's point. He had his own audacity, his own matchless skill to thank for every farthing of it. There it lay — two millions of money!

He smiled. Was his satisfaction troubled by no shadow of remorse? Not in the least. If some fresh lines had shown themselves of late about his mouth and brow, it may be safely assumed that they were summoned there by no "compunctious visitings." If William Trefalden looked anxious, it was because he felt the trembling of the mine beneath his feet, and knew that his danger grew more imminent with the delay of every hour. If William Trefalden cherished a regret, it was not because he had robbed his cousin of so much, but rather that he had not taken more.

Two millions of money! Pshaw! Why not three? Why not four? Two millions were barely his own

rightful share of the Trefalden legacy. Had not Saxon inherited four million seven hundred and seventy-six thousand pounds, and in simple fairness should not he, William Trefalden, have secured at least another three hundred and eighty-eight thousand for himself?

There was one moment when he might have had it — one moment when, by the utterance of a word, he might have swept all, *all*, into his own hands! That moment was when Saxon gave him the power of attorney in the library at Castletowers. He remembered that his cousin had even proposed with his own lips to double the amount of the investment. Fool! over-cautious, apprehensive fool that he had been to refuse it. He had absolutely not *dared* at the moment to grasp at the whole of the golden prize. He had dreaded lest the young man should not keep the secret faithfully; lest suspicion might be awakened among those through whose hands the money must pass; lest something should happen, something be said, something be done to bring about discovery. So, fearing to risk too much, he had let the glorious chance slip through his fingers, and now, when he might have realised all, he had to be content with less than half!

Well, even so, had he not achieved the possession of two millions? As he thought thus, as he contemplated the wealth before his eyes, he beheld, not mere gold and paper, but a dazzling vision of freedom, luxury, and love. His thoughts traversed the Atlantic, and there — in a new world, among a new people — he saw himself dwelling in a gorgeous home; rich in lands, equipages, books, pictures, slaves; adored by the woman whom he loved, and surrounded by all that makes life beautiful. Nor did he omit from this picture the

respect of his fellow-citizens or the affection of his dependants. The man meant to live honestly in that magnificent future; nay, would have preferred to win his two millions honestly, if he could. He had too fine a taste, too keen a sense of what was agreeable, not to appreciate to its fullest extent the luxury of respectability. William Trefalden liked a clean conscience as he liked a clean shirt, because it was both comfortable and gentlemanly, and suited his notions of refinement. So he fully intended to sin no more, but to cultivate all manner of public and private virtues, and die at last in the odour of popularity.

This delicious dream flashed through his mind in less time than it occupies in the recital. Hopes, regrets, anticipations, followed each other so swiftly that the smile with which his reverie began had scarcely faded from his lips, when he again took up his pen, and proceeded to note down in their order the particulars of his wealth.

For months past he had been quietly and cautiously disposing of this money, not selling out the whole two millions at once, but taking it a little at a time, placing some here, some there, and transferring the greater portion of it, under his assumed name of Forsyth, to foreign securities.

One by one, he now examined each packet of notes and shares, each rouleau of gold, each bag of precious stones; returned each to the cashbox, and entered a memorandum of its nature and value in the pages of his private account book. This account book was a tiny little volume, fitted with a patent lock and small enough to go into the waistcoat pocket. Had he lost it, the finder thereof would have profited little

by its contents, for the whole was written in a cunning cypher of William Trefalden's own invention.

English bank notes to the value of thousands and tens of thousands of pounds; notes of the Banque de France for tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of francs: American notes for tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars; Austrian notes, Russian notes, Belgian and Dutch notes, notes issued by many governments and of the highest denominations; certificates of government stock in all the chief capitals of Europe; shares in great Indian and European railways; in steam navigation companies, insurance companies, gas companies, docks, mines, and banks in all parts of the civilised world — in India, in Egypt, in Rio Janeiro, in Ceylon, in Canada, in New Zealand, in the Mauritius, in Jamaica, in Van Diemen's Land; rouleaux of English sovereigns, of Napoleons, of Friedrichs d'or; tiny bags of diamonds and rubies, each a dowry for a princess; — money, money, money, in a thousand channels, in a thousand forms — there it lay, palpable to the eye and the touch; there it lay, and he entered it in his book, packed it away in his cash-box, and told it over to the uttermost farthing.

He alone knew the care, the anxious thought, the wearisome precautions that those investments had cost him. He alone knew how difficult it had been to choose the safe and avoid the doubtful; to be perpetually buying, first in this quarter, then in that, without attracting undue attention in the money market; to transact with his own unaided hand all the work connected with those purchases, and yet so to transact it that not even his own clerks should suspect how he was employed.

However, it was all over now — literally all over, when, at half-past nine o'clock in the evening, he at length turned the key upon the last rouleau, and noted down the last sum in his account book.

Then he took a deed-box from the shelf above the door, locked the cash-box inside it, and put the key in his pocket. That deed-box was inscribed in white letters with the name of a former client — a client long since dead, Mr. Forsyth.

Having done this, he placed both in a large carpet-bag lined throughout with strong leather, and fitted with a curious and complicated padlock — a bag which he had had made for this express purpose weeks and weeks back. Last of all, having strapped and locked the bag; locked the empty safe; stirred the ashes beneath the grate, to see if any unburned fragments yet remained; cast a farewell glance round the room in which so many hours of his life had been spent; put out his lamp, and put on his hat, William Trefalden took up the precious carpet-bag, and left the place, as he believed, for ever.

But it was not for ever. It was not even for ten minutes; for behold, when he had gone down the gloomy staircase and unlatched the house-door at the end of the passage opening upon the street, he found himself face to face with a tall young man whose hand was at that very moment uplifted to ring the housekeeper's bell — a tall young man who stood between him and the lamplight, and barred the way exclaiming: —

"Not so fast, if you please, cousin William. I must trouble you to turn back again, if you please. I have something to say to you."

CHAPTER XLIII.

Face to Face.

Olimpia's fortitude broke down utterly when all was over. She neither sobbed nor raved, nor gave expression to her woe as women are wont to do; but she seemed suddenly to loose her hold upon life and become lost in measureless despair. She neither spoke nor slept, hungered nor thirsted; but remained, hour after hour, pale, motionless, speechless as the one for whom she mourned. From this apathy she was by-and-by roused to the sharp agony of a last, inevitable parting. This was when her father's corpse was removed at Civita Vecchia, and Lord Castletowers left them, in order to attend the poor remains to their last resting-place in Rome; but this trial over, and her disguise exchanged for mourning robes befitting her sorrow and her sex, Miss Colonna relapsed into her former lethargy, and passively accepted such advice as those about her had to offer. The yacht then went on to Nice, where, in accordance with Saxon's suggestion, Olimpia was to await the Earl's return.

It is unnecessary to say that Saxon cast anchor in vain in the picturesque port of that pleasant town. In vain he called upon the English consul; in vain applied to the chief of police, to the postal authoritities, to every official personage from whom he conceived it possible to procure the information of which he was in search. The name of Rivière had not been heard in the place.

He examined the visitors' list for the last three

months, but found no record of their arrival. He inquired at the bank with the same unsatisfactory result. It was the slack season, too, at Nice — the season when visitors are few, and every stranger is known by name and sight — and yet no ladies answering in any way to his description had been seen there that summer.

Having spent the best part of a day in the prosecution of this hopeless quest, Saxon was forced at last to conclude that Mrs. and Miss Rivière were not merely undiscoverable in Nice, but that they had never been to Nice at all.

And now, he asked himself, what was to be done? To leave Miss Colonna among strangers was impossible. To remain with her at Nice, was, for himself, equally impossible. However, Olimpia cut the knot of this difficulty by announcing her desire to be taken at once to England. She had friends in London, dear and tried friends, who had laboured with her in the Italian cause for many years, among whom she would now find tender sympathy. She expressed no wish to go to Castletowers, as she would surely have done a few months before; and Saxon, knowing the cause of her silence, dared not propose it to her.

So having written a hasty line to Lord Castletowers informing him of their change of plans, Saxon despatched his yacht to Portsmouth, bade farewell to Montecuculi, who was now hastening back to south Italy, and conducted Miss Colonna back through France as fast as the fastest trains could take them. On the fifteenth of September, at four o'clock in the afternoon, they landed at Dover. By eight o'clock that same evening, the young man had conducted the lady to the

house of a friend at Chiswick, and, having despatched a hasty dinner at his club, posted down to the City — not so much with any expectation of finding his cousin at the office, as in the hope of learning something of his where-abouts. What he actually anticipated was to hear that the lawyer had disappeared long since, and was gone no one knew whither.

He was therefore almost as much startled as the lawyer himself, when the door opened, as it were, under his hand, and he found himself standing face to face with William Trefalden.

"This is indeed a surprise, Saxon," said Mr. Trefalden, as they withdrew into the passage.

"I fear, not an agreeable one, cousin William," replied the young man, sternly.

But the lawyer had already surveyed his position, and chosen his line of defence. If, for a moment, his heart failed within him, he betrayed no sign of confusion. Quick to think, prompt to act, keenly sensible that his one hope lay in his own desperate wits, he became at once master of the situation.

"Nay," he replied, quite easily and pleasantly, "how should it be other than agreeable to welcome you back after three months' absence? I scarcely expected, however, to see you quite so soon. Why did you not write to tell me you were coming?"

But to this question, Saxon, following his cousin up the staircase, made no reply.

Mr. Trefalden unlocked his office-door, lit his office-lamp, and led the way into his private room.

"And now, Saxon," said he, "sit down, and tell me all about Norway."

But Saxon folded his arms, and remained standing.

"I have nothing to tell you about Norway."

"Not been to Norway? Where then have you been, my dear fellow?"

"To Italy — to the East."

He looked hard at his cousin's face as he said this; but Mr. Trefalden only elevated his eyebrows the very least in the world, seated himself carelessly in his accustomed chair, and replied: —

"A change of programme, indeed! What caused you to give up the North?"

"Chance. Perhaps fate."

The lawyer smiled.

"My dear Saxon," he said, "you have grown quite oracular in your style of conversation. But why do you not sit down?"

"Because you and I are friends no longer," replied the young man; "because you have betrayed the trust I placed in you, and the friendship I gave you; because you have wronged me, lied to me, robbed me; because you are a felon, and I am an honest man!"

Mr. Trefalden turned livid with rage, and grasped the arm of his chair so fiercely that the veins swelled upon his hand, and the knuckles stood out white beneath the skin.

"Have you reflected, Saxon Trefalden," he said, in a deep, suppressed voice, "that this is such language as no one man can forgive from another?"

"Forgive!" echoed Saxon, indignantly. "Do *you* talk to *me* of forgiveness? Do you understand that I know all — all? All your treachery — all your baseness! I know that your Overland Company is a lie. I know there are neither directors nor shares, engineers nor works. I know that the whole scheme was simply

a gigantic fraud devised by yourself for your own iniquitous ends!"

The lawyer bit his lip, and his eye glittered dangerously; but he kept his passion down, and replied, with forced calmness: —

"You know, I presume, that the New Overland Route scheme was a bubble. I could have told you that. I could also have told you that I have not the honour to be the contriver of that bubble. On the contrary, I am one of its victims."

Saxon looked at him with bitter incredulity; but he went on: —

"As for your money, it is all safe — or nearly all. You have lost about sixteen thousand pounds by the transaction — I, as many hundreds."

"If it were not that I can scarcely conceive of so much infamy as would be implied in the doubt," said Saxon, "I should say that I do not believe one word of what you tell me!"

"You will repent this," said Mr. Trefalden, grinding the words out slowly between his teeth. "You will repent this from your very soul!"

Saxon put his hand to his brow, and pushed back his hair in an impatient, bewildered way.

"If I only knew what to believe!" he exclaimed, passionately.

Mr. Trefalden looked at his watch.

"If you will have the goodness to come here tomorrow at twelve," he said, "I will send one of my clerks with you to the Bank of England, to satisfy you of the safety of your money. In the meanwhile, I do not see that anything is gained by a conversation

which, on one side, at least, consists of mere vituperation. Have you anything more to say to me?"

"Yes. Where are Mrs. and Miss Rivière?"

"Mrs. Rivière is dead. Miss Rivière has returned to Florence."

"You told me they were at Nice."

"I believed it when I told you so, but I was mistaken."

"One more question, if you please. What have you done with the twenty-five thousand pounds due to Mr. Behrens?"

The lawyer rose haughtily from his seat.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"Simply this — what have you done with the twenty-five thousand pounds placed in your hands by Lord Castletowers two years ago, for the payment of Mr. Behrens' claim?"

"This, I presume, is meant for another insult?" said Mr. Trefalden. "I decline to reply to it."

"You had better reply to it," cried the young man, earnestly. "For your own sake, I counsel you to reply to it. Tomorrow will be too late."

The lawyer took a card from the mantelshelf and flung it disdainfully upon the table.

"There is Mr. Behrens' card," he said. "Go yourself to him tomorrow, and ask whether his mortgage has been paid off or not."

Saxon snatched up the card, and read — "Oliver Behrens, *Woolstapler*, 70, *Bread-street, E. C.*"

"God forgive you, if you are again deceiving me, William!" he said.

But Mr. Trefalden only pointed to the open door.

"Whatever more you may have to say to me," he replied, "I will hear tomorrow."

Saxon lingered for a moment on the threshold, still looking earnestly, almost imploringly, in the lawyer's face. Then, once more saying "God forgive you, if you are deceiving me!" he turned away, and went slowly down the stairs.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Triumphant Result of Mr. Keckwitch's peculiar Talents.

RETURNING to his chambers weary and anxious, Saxon was not particularly delighted to find his dear friend, Mr. Laurence Greatorex, in possession of a sofa, making himself thoroughly at home with a newspaper, a cup of coffee, and a cigarette. Somewhat over-demonstrative at the best of times, the banker's greetings were more than commonly oppressive on this occasion.

"I happened to drop in at the club," he said, "and, hearing that you had been there today, I wouldn't lose an hour in coming to see you, my dear boy — not an hour!"

And then he shook hands with Saxon for the twentieth time, and again protested that he was never so glad to see any one in his life — never, by Jove!

"But you don't look much the better for your Norwegian trip," he added.

"I suppose I am tired," replied Saxon, with a glance at the time-piece. "I have been travelling incessantly for some days."

"I hope you are not too tired to hear something that I have to tell you," said the banker.

"What is it about?"

"Well, it's about your precious cousin in Chancery Lane."

Saxon shook his head impatiently.

"Oh, Mr. Greatorex," he said, "that will wait till tomorrow."

"I am not so sure that it will. I am not sure, Trefalden, that you have come one day too soon."

"If you mean that the new Company is all a bubble," said Saxon, gloomily, "I know it already."

"You do?"

Saxon nodded.

"Lost money by it?"

"Yes; some."

"All that Mr. Trefalden undertook to invest for you?"

"No; less than one hundredth part of it. Only sixteen thousand pounds."

"Less than one hundreth part of it!" repeated the banker. "By all the powers, then, you had entrusted him with something like two millions of money!"

"Just two millions."

"What, then, has become of the remaining nineteen hundred and eighty-four thousand pounds?"

"It is re-invested, I presume, in Government stock."

"You presume? What do you mean by saying you 'presume?' Who told you so?"

"My cousin himself, not an hour ago. He said he would send one of his clerks with me tomorrow to the Bank of England, that I might satisfy myself as to the

Mr. Greatorex got up and took three or four turns about the room, thinking profoundly.

"Did he tell you he was going shortly out of town?"

"No."

"And you took him by surprise, did you not?"

"Quite by surprise."

"Humph! Made an appointment with you for to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At his office."

"What hour?"

"Twelve."

Mr. Greatorex struck the table sharply with his open hand.

"Then he won't keep it!" exclaimed he. "I'd stake my head that he won't keep it!"

Saxon, leaning his head moodily upon his hands, was of the same opinion.

"Now, look here, Trefalden," said the banker, excitedly, "I have had my suspicions of your cousin all along. You know that; but some queer things have come to my ears of late. Do you know where he lives?"

"No."

"I do. Do you know *how* he lives?"

"Not in the least."

"I do."

"How did you come by your knowledge?"

"By means of his own head clerk — a fat fellow with a wheezy voice, and a face like an overboiled apple-pudding."

"I know the man — Mr. Keckwitch."

"The same. And now, if you will just listen to me for five minutes, I will tell you the whole story from beginning to end."

And with this, Mr. Greatorex related all about his interview with the lawyer; telling how William Trefalden had faltered and changed colour at the first mention of the new Company; how speciously he had explained away Saxon's statement regarding the investment; and how, at the close of the interview, the banker found that he had not really advanced one step towards the corroboration of his doubts. About a week or ten days, however, after this interview, Mr. Abel Keckwitch presented himself in Lombard Street, and, with an infinite deal of cautious circumlocution, gave Laurence Greatorex to understand that he would be willing to co-operate with him, to any safe extent, against William Trefalden. Then came a string of strange disclosures. Then, for the first time, the banker learned the mystery of the lawyer's private life. A long course of secret and profuse expenditure, of debt, of pleasure, of reckless self-indulgence, was laid open to his astonished eyes. The history of the fair but frail Madame Duvernay and every detail of the ménage of Elton House, down to the annual sum-total of Mr. Trefalden's wine-bill, and the salary of his French cook, were unfolded with a degree of method and precision eminently characteristic of Mr. Keckwitch's peculiar talents. He had devoted the leisure of the whole summer to this delightful task, and had exhausted his ingenuity in its accomplishment. He had learned everything which it was possible for any man not actually residing within the walls of Elton

House to know. He had followed Madame's elegant little brougham to the parks, listened to her singing in the stillness of the summer evenings, and watched his employer in and out of the house, over and over again. He had ingratiated himself with the Kensington trades-people; he had made acquaintance with the tax-collector; he had even achieved a ponderous, respectable, church-going flirtation with Madame's housekeeper, who was a serious person with an account at the savings-bank. In short, when Mr. Keckwitch brought his information to Lombard Street, he knew quite enough to be a valuable coadjutor, and Mr. Laurence Greatorex was only too glad to grasp at the proffered alliance.

"And now, my dear boy," said the banker, "the most important fact of all is just this — William Trefalden is preparing to bolt. For the last two days he has been posting up his accounts, clearing out old papers, and the like. He tells the people in Chancery Lane that he is going out of town for a few weeks; but Keckwitch don't believe it, and no more do I. He has his eye upon the stars and stripes, as sure as your name is Saxon Trefalden!"

CHAPTER XLV.

On Guard.

Saxon was fixed in his determination not to have recourse to the law. In vain the banker entreated permission to call in the aid of Mr. Nicodemus Kidd; in vain represented the urgency of the case, the magnitude of the stakes, and the difficulty — it might almost be said the impossibility — of doing anything really effectual in their own unassisted persons. To all this Saxon only replied that there were but three surviving Trefaldens, and, happen what might, he would not disgrace that old Cornish name by dragging his cousin before a public tribunal. This was his stand-point, and nothing could move him from it.

A little after midnight the banker left him, and, repairing straight to Pentonville, roused the virtuous Keckwitch from his first sleep, and sat with him in strict council for more than an hour and a half. By three o'clock he was back again in Saxon's chamber; and by five, ere the first grey dawn of the misty September morning was visible overhead, the two young men had alighted from a cab at the top of Slade's Lane, and were briskly patrolling the deserted pavement.

Dawn came, and then day. The shabby suburban sparrows woke up in their nesting-places, and, after much preliminary chirrupping, came down and hopped familiarly in the path of the watchers. Presently a sweep went by with his brushes over his shoulder, and was followed by three or four labourers going to their work in the neighbouring cabbage gardens.

Then a cart rumbled along the High Street; then three or four in succession; and after that the tide of wheels set fairly in, and never ceased. By-and-by, when the policeman at the corner had almost grown tired of keeping his eye upon them, and the young men themselves had begun to weary of this fruitless tramping to and fro, they were unexpectedly joined by Mr. Keckwitch.

"Beg your pardon, gentlemen," said he, "but I thought I'd best come over. Two heads, you know, are better than one, and maybe three are better than two. Anyhow, here I am."

Whereupon the head clerk, who was quite out of breath from fast walking, took off his hat and dabbed his forehead with his blue cotton pocket-handkerchief. Respectable as he was, Saxon regarded the man with inexpressible aversion. To him, Mr. Abel Keckwitch was simply a spy and an informer; and spies and informers, according to Saxon's creed, scarcely came within the pale of humanity.

"Of course, gentlemen, you've seen nothing as yet," pursued the head clerk, when he had recovered breath. "Not likely. About eight o'clock, or from eight to half-past, will be about the time to look out. Most of the Expresses start towards nine, you see; and he's safe to be off by one of 'em. Now, I've got a cab awaitin' round the corner, and all we shall have to do will be to watch him out of the house, jump in, and follow."

"Keckwitch thinks of everything," said Greatorex, approvingly.

"The main question is — where's he a-goin' to? I say, America."

"America, of course!"

"Well, then, you see he might start from the London Docks, or Southampton, or Glasgow, or Liverpool — but most likely Liverpool. Now there ain't no boat either to-day or to-morrow from either one of those ports — that I've ascertained; but then he's safe to get away somewhere and keep quiet till the chance turns up. He might catch the Liverpool boat, you know, at Kingstown, or the Southampton boat at Havre. In short, we must be prepared for him everywhere, and keep our eyes open all round."

"Yours seem all right, Keckwitch, at any rate," said the banker.

"Well, sir, I ain't closed 'em for one half minute since you were at Pentonville," replied Mr. Keckwitch, complacently. "One needs to be especial watchful, having no professionals to help us forward."

At this moment the church clock struck eight, and the postman made his appearance at the upper end of Slade's Lane. The head clerk at once disengaged himself from the group, and desiring his fellow-watchers to keep aloof, began sauntering up and down within a few yards of the gates of Elton House. Presently the postman crossed over, letters in hand, and rang the gate-bell. Mr. Keckwitch was at his elbow in a moment.

"Can you tell me, postman," said he, blandly, "if there's any party of the name of Henley residin' in this street?"

"Henley?" repeated the letter-carrier. "No — not that I know of. There's a Henry in Silver Street, if that's what you mean."

But that was not at all what Mr. Keckwitch meant.

Mr. Keckwitch only meant to read the address upon the letter in the postman's, hand, and having done so, hastened back to Saxon and Greatorex at the bottom of the street.

"By the Lord, gentlemen," he exclaimed, striking his clenched fist against his open palm, "he's off!"

"Off?" repeated Saxon and Greatorex in one breath.

"Aye — I saw his writin' on the envelope. It's one of our office envelopes, and has been posted in a pillar-box overnight. He's off — and we might dodge about here till Doomsday, for all the good we could do by it."

"He has secured ten hours' start, too — curse him!" said Greatorex, fiercely.

"Curse him, with all my heart!" echoed the head clerk fervently.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A Tender Episode.

Mr. Keckwitch rang boldly at the gate of Elton House, and requested to see Mrs. Filmer. Mrs. Filmer was Madame Duvernay's serious housekeeper. The head clerk, for prudential reasons, had never ventured to call upon her before; but the time for prudence was now gone by, and the time for boldness was come.

There was an air of flurry and confusion about the place which Mr. Keckwitch detected as soon as he set foot across Madame's threshold. The servant who admitted him had a scared look upon her face, and having shown him to the door of the housekeeper's

room, scampered away again as fast as her legs could carry her. Presently a bell rang violently up-stairs, and was followed by a sound of running feet and rustling skirts along the passage. Then came an interval of dead silence; and by and by Mrs. Filmer made her appearance, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Jennings," she said, "you come at a sad moment, sir. We are in terrible trouble here this morning."

The head clerk, who had introduced himself to Mrs. Filmer in one of those church-going conversations by the unassuming name of Jennings, here pressed the housekeeper's hand in both his own, and replied that he was sorry for anything which made her unhappy.

Mrs. Filmer then went on to say that Madame had just received the cruellest letter from master. Master had actually gone away, nobody knew where, without even bidding Madame good bye; and as good as told her in plain black and white that he should never come back again. Madame had been in hysterics ever since. Poor Madame! such a kind, dear, sweet-natured lady, too . . . . but there, what could one expect? men were such brutes!

"Not all men, my dear Mrs. Filmer," wheezed the head clerk, tenderly reproachful.

Whereupon Mrs. Filmer tossed her head, and believed that there wasn't so much difference between the best and the worst as some folks imagined.

"There's myself, for instance," said Mr. Keckwitch. "I abhor perfidy — I do, indeed, ma'am."

"Ah, so you say, Mr. Jennings," sighed the housekeeper.

"I'll prove it to you, Mrs. Filmer. If you'll get me a sight of that letter, so that I can examine the writin' and postmark, I'll go down at once to the city and push inquiry in certain quarters that I know of; and if I don't succeed in findin' out which way your scamp of a master's gone, I give you leave never to speak to me again!"

"Oh, Mr. Jennings, do you really mean that?"

"Mean it, ma'am? — Bless you, this sort o' thing is all in my way. Many and many's the runaway bankrupt we've caught just as he was steppin' aboard of the steamer that was to carry him to Boulogne or New York! Do you think you can put your hand on the letter?"

"I think so. It was lying on the floor just now, down by Madame's bedside, and a bank note for five hundred pounds as well, which I picked up and put in her purse. She didn't regard the money, poor soul!"

"Women never do," said the head clerk; "their little hearts are so tender."

Mrs. Filmer looked down, and sighed again.

"I'm sure yours is. I hope it is — my dear," added he; and, sidling a step nearer, that respectable man actually kissed her!

About ten minutes later Mr. Keckwitch came out of the gates of Elton House radiant with triumph. He had William Trefalden's letter in his pocket-book. It contained only these words: —

"Adieu, Thérèse. Circumstances over which I have no control compel me to leave England — perhaps, for ever. I bid you farewell with tender regret. Try to think of me kindly, and believe that if you knew

all, you would not blame me for the step which I now find myself compelled to take. I enclose a Bank of England note for five hundred pounds. The house and all that it contains is yours. Once more farewell. May you be happier in the future than I have made you in the past. — W. TREFALDEN."

CHAPTER XLVII.

Is it a Trap?

THEY went first of all to the office in Chancery Lane, where they found the clerks just settling to their work, and the housemaid blacking the grate in William Trefalden's private room. To put a summary stop to this damsel's proceedings, dismiss her, lock the door, and institute a strict but rapid investigation of all that the place contained was their next course. They examined the contents of the waste-paper basket, turned out the table-drawers, broke open the safe; but found nothing of any value or importance.

"Look here," said Saxon, presently. "What is this?"

It was only a crumpled envelope, the inside of which was covered with pencilled memoranda.

Greatorex uttered a cry of triumph.

"A sketch of his route, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "Where did you find this?"

"On the mantelshelf here, beside the almanack."

"Listen: — 'London to Boulogne by steamer — three A.M. Eight hours. Boulogne to Paris — eleven A.M. Paris to Marseilles — 8·40, through. Marseilles

to Algiers — nine P. M. Or Constantiople — five P. M.'"

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Keckwitch.

"All — and he was off, of course, by the early Boulogne boat by three this morning. Eight hours passage — confound him! he will be landing in half an hour; and by six or seven this evening will be in Paris, whence he will go straight through to Marseilles by that 8·40 express."

"The 8·40 express reaches Marseilles at 3·45 the following afternoon," said Mr. Keckwitch, who had wisely provided himself with a Continental time-table.

"And the next through train from London?" asked Greatorex.

"Half-past eight this evenin'."

The banker uttered an angry oath; but Mr. Keckwitch only took up the envelope, and examined it thoughtfully.

"I shall not attempt to overtake him," said Saxon. "He has seventeen hours' start. It would be sheer folly."

"If you would but consent to telegraph to the police at Paris," began the banker — but Saxon silenced him with a gesture.

"No," he said resolutely. "Nothing shall induce me to do that. Once for all, I will not deal with him as with a felon."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Keckwitch, still examining the envelope, "I'm not sure that this paper ain't just a trap."

"A trap!"

The head clerk nodded.

"He's such a clever chap," said he. "Too clever by half to commit a blunder of this sort. I no more

believe he's gone by that Boulogne boat than I believe he's gone to Paradise."

"Where, then, do you suppose he *is* gone?" said the banker, impatiently.

"Likely enough that he ain't left London at all. And, somehow or another, I have my doubts . . ."

"Doubts of what?"

Mr. Keckwitch rubbed his fat hands over and over, and wagged his head knowingly before replying.

"That, may be, there's a woman in the case."

The banker laughed outright at the absurdity of this notion; but over Saxon's mind there flashed a sudden, strange suspicion — a suspicion so vivid that it stood to him for a conviction; a conviction so startling that it came to him like a revelation.

Helen Rivière!

The name almost escaped his lips, with the shock of discovery. He saw the whole plot now — saw it as plainly as if his cousin's secret soul had been laid bare before him. His course was taken on the instant. With conviction came decision; with quick sight, prompt action.

"I have changed my mind," he said. "I will pursue the search. I am willing to employ any means short of bringing my cousin before a court of justice. Tell me what is best to be done, and I will do it."

His resolute tone took them by surprise.

"Come," said Greatorex, "this is common sense."

But Saxon, who had been all irresolution up to this moment, was now all impatience.

"For Heaven's sake," he exclaimed, "let us lose no more time in talking. Moments are precious. What is to be done?"

"Well, sir, in the first place," replied Mr. Keckwitch, "you must give private employment to three or four sharp fellows — my friend Mr. Kidd will know where to find 'em for you."

"Good. Go on."

"One must search in and about London; one must go upon this foreign track, just for safety; and one must run down to Liverpool with instructions to cross to Kingstown if he sees cause to do so."

"Yes, yes. Go on."

"And you must offer a fair reward."

"How much?"

"Well, sir, would you think a couple of hundred too much?"

"I will make it a couple of thousands."

"Bravo!" cried Greatorex, "for two thousand pounds these detective fellows would find you the bones of Adam and Eve!"

"Say you so? Then it shall be five thousand. Mr. Keckwitch I authorise you to offer a reward of five thousand pounds in my name."

The head clerk bowed down before Saxon as if he had been a demi-god, and said that it should be done forthwith.

"I'll go myself with the fellow who takes the Paris job," said Mr. Greatorex. "I shall enjoy the excitement of the thing; and you, Trefalden, had better go to Liverpool."

Saxon shook his head.

"No," he said, "my field shall be London."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Saxon takes his own Course.

"MAY BE there's a woman in the case."

Those words caused Saxon to fling himself heart and soul into the pursuit. They roused all the will and energy that were in him. It was but a random guess of Mr. Keckwitch's, after all; but it did what the loss of two millions of money had failed to do.

The more he thought of it, the more probable — the more terribly probable — it seemed. So young, so lovely, so fresh to the world as Helen Rivière was, what more likely than that William Trefalden should desire to have her for his own? What more likely than that she, being so poor and so friendless, should accept him? She would be certain to do so, if only for her mother's sake. For Saxon did not now believe that Mrs. Rivière was dead. As he had once trusted his cousin with an infinite trust, he now regarded his every word and deed with unbounded suspicion. He neither believed that Mrs. Rivière was dead nor that Helen was gone to Florence, nor that any statement that William Trefalden had ever made to him at any time was other than deliberately and blackly false.

Granting, however, that Mrs. Rivière might be no more — and it was, after all, sufficiently likely to be true — would not the lonely girl cling to whoever was nearest and kindest to her at the time? And then Saxon remembered how gentlemanly, how gracious, how persuasive his cousin could be — how sweet his smile was — how pleasant and low his voice!

Poor Helen! Poor, pretty, trustful, gentle Helen! What a fate for her! It made his heart ache and his blood boil, and brought to the surface all that was tenderest and manliest in his nature only to think of it.

Within five minutes after he had announced his decision, the three men parted at the door of William Trefalden's office. Each went his separate way — Keckwitch to engage the detectives, Greatorex to make arrangements for his temporary absence, and Saxon to pursue his own quest according to his own plan.

He went straight to Brudenell Terrace, Camberwell, and inquired for Miss Rivière.

The belligerent maid-servant reconnoitred through a couple of inches of open doorway before replying.

"Miss Rivers don't live here now," she said, sharply.

This, however, was only what Saxon had expected to hear.

"Can you oblige me then," he said, "with her present address?"

"No, I can't."

"But surely Miss Rivière must have left an address when she removed from here?"

"There was an address left," replied the girl; "but it ain't right, so it's of no use to anyone."

"How do you know that it is not right?"

"Because it's been tried, of course. But I can't stand here all day."

And the girl made as if she was about to shut the door in Saxon's face, but seeing his fingers on their way to his waistcoat pocket, relented. He placed a sovereign in her hand.

"I want to know all that you can tell me on this subject," he said.

She looked at the coin and at him, and shook her head suspiciously.

"What's this for?" she said.

"For your information. I would not mind what I gave to anyone who could put me in the way of finding where those ladies are gone."

"But I can't tell you what I don't know."

"That's true; but you may as well tell me all you do."

The girl, still looking at him somewhat doubtfully, invited him to step inside the passage.

"I can show you the card," she said; "but I know it's of no use. There was a gentleman here the other day — he came from a great London shop, and would have put pounds and pounds of painting in Miss Rivers's way — and though he wrote it all down exact, he couldn't find the place."

And with this she plunged into the little empty front parlour and brought out a card, on which were pencilled in William Trefalden's own hand the following words: — "Mrs. Rivière, *Beaufort Villa, St. John's Wood.*"

Saxon almost started on seeing his cousin's well-known hand.

"Who wrote this?" he asked quickly.

"It was Mr. Forsyth that wrote it, after the ladies were in the cab."

"Mr. Forsyth?" he repeated.

And then the girl, grown suddenly communicative, went on to say that Mr. Forsyth was a rich gentleman who, having known "Mr. Rivers" a great many years ago, had sought the ladies out, paid enormous prices for Mr. Rivers's pictures, and induced Mrs. and Miss

Rivers to remove to a pleasanter part of London. Even in this matter, he took all the trouble off their hands, and they never so much as saw their new lodgings before he came to take them there. There never was such a kind, thoughtful, pleasant gentleman, to be sure! As for the address, Mrs. Rivers never thought of it till just at the last moment, and then Mr. Forsyth wrote it out as he stood in the passage — the ladies being already in the fly, and ready to drive off.

"And that is all you know about it?" asked Saxon, still turning the card over and over.

"Every word."

"I suppose I may keep the card?"

"Oh, yes, if you like; but you'll find there's no such place."

"Did Mrs. Rivière seem to be much worse before she left here?"

"No. We thought she was better, and so did Miss Rivers."

Saxon turned reluctantly towards the door.

"Thank you," he said. "I wish you could have told me more."

"I suppose you are a friend of the family?" said the girl inquisitively.

Saxon nodded.

"You — you can't 'tell me, I suppose, whether Mr...."

"Forsyth?"

"Ay — whether Mr. Forsyth was engaged to Miss Rivière?" said he, with some hesitation.

She screwed her mouth up, and jerked her head expressively.

"They weren't when they left here," she replied;

"but anybody could guess how it would be before long."

Then, seeing the trouble in the young man's face, she added quickly: —

"On his side, you know. He worshipped the ground Miss Rivers walked upon; but I don't believe she cared a brass farthing for him."

To which Saxon only replied by thanking her again, and then turned despondingly away.

He would go to St. John's Wood; but he felt beforehand that it would be useless. It was to be expected that William Trefalden would give a false address. It was, of course, a part of his plan to do so.

In the midst of these reflections, just as he had reached the farther end of the terrace, the girl came running after him.

"Sir, sir!" she said breathlessly, "I've just thought of Doctor Fisher. He was Mrs. Rivers's doctor, and he'll be sure to know where they went!"

"God bless you for that thought, my girl!" said Saxon. "Where does he live?"

"I don't know; but it's somewhere about Camberwell. You'll be sure to find him."

"Yes, yes — easily." And again Saxon dipped his fingers into his waistcoat pocket. But the girl shook her head.

"Lord love you!" said she, "I don't want any more of your money — you've given me too much already!"

And with this she laughed, and ran away.

Saxon jumped back into his cab, and desired to be driven to the first chemist's shop on the road.

"For the chemists," muttered he to himself as he rattled along, "are sure to know all about the doctors."

CHAPTER XLIX.

Doctor Fisher.

Doctor Fisher dwelt in a big, stucco-fronted, many-windowed house, with gates and a portico — a strictly professional-looking house, that stood back from the road, as if with a sulky sense of its own superiority to the humbler dwellings round about — a house before whose grim portals no organ boy would presume to linger, and no Punch to set up his temporary stage. A solemn looking servant in a sad-coloured livery opened the door, and ushered Saxon to the physician's presence.

Dr. Fisher was a massive man, with an important manner, and a deep, rolling voice like the pedal pipes of an organ. He received his visitor courteously, begged him to be seated, and replied clearly and readily to all Saxon's inquiries. Mrs. Rivière was indeed dead. She died about a fortnight before, and was buried in Norwood cemetery. The Rivières had removed from Camberwell about two, or it might be nearly three, months previous to this catastrophe. During the first six or eight weeks of her sojourn at Sydenham, Mrs. Rivière had gained strength, and was so far improved as to be on the point of undertaking a voyage to Madeira, when she unfortunately caught that cold which shortly after resulted in her death. Dr. Fisher did not attend Mrs. Rivière's funeral. He believed that Miss Rivière and Mr. Forsyth were the only mourners. He had never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Forsyth, but he had heard both Mrs. and Miss Rivière make

frequent reference to him, as a friend to whom they were bound by many ties of gratitude and regard. Miss Rivière, he believed, was well. He had called upon her in the morning of the day following that on which her mother was buried; but not since. Her present address was Beulah Villa, Sydenham. He regretted that he had no further information to offer; protested that he was entirely at his visitor's service; and wished him a gracious "good-morning."

Ushered out again by the solemn lacquey, Saxon pushed on at once to Sydenham.

Beulah Villa proved to be one of a series of semi-detached houses in a quiet side-road over-looking some fields, about half a mile from the Crystal Palace. His cab had no sooner pulled up, however, before the gate, than an ominous card in the dining-room window prepared him for a fresh disappointment.

Miss Rivière had left nearly a week ago.

"She went away, sir, the second day after her poor ma's funeral," explained the good woman of the house — a cheery, kindly, good-humoured-looking body, with floury hands and a white apron. "She couldn't abide the place, pretty dear, after what had happened."

"If you will be so kind as to oblige me with Miss Rivière's present address....."

"Well, sir, I'm sorry to say that is just what I can *not* do," interrupted the landlady. "Miss Rivière didn't know it herself — not to be certain about it."

"But surely something must have been said — something by which one could form some idea," said Saxon. "Do you think she was going abroad?"

"Oh dear no, sir. She was going to the sea-side."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, sir — positive."

"And yet is it possible that no one place was mentioned as being more likely than another?"

"Two or three places were mentioned, sir; but I took no account of the names of 'em."

"You can at least remember one?"

"No, sir — I can't indeed."

"Try — pray try. Do you think you could remember them if I were to repeat the names of several sea-side places to you?"

His intense earnestness seemed to strike the woman.

"I am very sorry, sir," she said: "but I have no more idea of them than the babe unborn. I don't believe I should know them if I was to hear them — I don't, indeed."

"Did Miss Rivière leave your house — alone?"

"No, sir. Mr. Forsyth went with her."

Saxon almost ground his teeth at that name.

"Mr. Forsyth was very often here, I suppose," he said.

"Very often, sir."

"Almost every day?"

The woman looked at him with a mixture of curiosity and compassion that showed plainly what she thought of this cross-examination.

"Why yes, sir," she replied, reluctantly. "I suppose it was about every day lately."

The young man thanked her, and turned sadly away. At the bottom of the steps, he paused.

"You do not even know to which railway terminus they went?" he asked, as a last chance.

She shook her head.

"Indeed, sir, I do not," she answered. "I wish I did."

"If one could even find the cabman who drove them . . . ."

The landlady clapped her hands together.

"There, now!" she exclaimed. "Why, to be sure, they went in one of Davis's flys!"

Saxon bounded up the steps again.

"You dear, good soul!" he said, "where shall I find this Davis? Where are his stables? Where does he live? Tell me quickly."

She told him quickly and clearly — the second turning to the left, and then up a lane. He could not miss it. Every one knew Davis's stables.

He scarcely waited to hear the last words. Full of hope and excitement, he dashed into his cab again, and was gone in a moment.

CHAPTER L.

Following up the Scent.

Davis's stables were soon found; also Davis — Davis of the stable stably, all waistcoat, all pockets, all wide-awake, with a wisp of spotted cambric round his neck, a straw in his mouth, and no legs to speak of. This gentleman — not insensible to the attractions of her Majesty's profile in low relief on a neat pocket medallion — distinctly remembered supplying a fly on the morning in question. It was his large green fly, and he drove it himself. The gentleman desired him to drive to the Great Western Railway Station. The lady was in deep mourning, and looked as if she had been crying. When they got to Paddington, the gentleman gave him half-a-crown over and above his fare.

The luggage all belonged to the lady. A porter took it off the cab and carried it into the station. Davis thought he should know the porter again; if he saw him. He was a tall, red-haired man with only one eye. Did not hear it said to what station on the line the lady and gentleman were going. Was quite willing, however, to go over to the Great Western Terminus and do what he could to identify the porter.

So Mr. Davis shuffled himself into a light overcoat, accepted a seat in Saxon's Hansom, and was forthwith whirled away to Paddington. The one-eyed porter was found without difficulty. His name was Bell. He remembered the lady and gentleman quite well. The lady left her umbrella in the first-class waiting-room, and he found it there. He ran after the train as it was moving away from the platform, but could not get up with the carriage soon enough to restore the umbrella. However, the gentleman came back to London that same evening, and inquired about it. Gave Bell a shilling for his trouble. The luggage was labelled Clevedon. He was certain it was Clevedon, because he had labelled it with his own hands, and remembered having first of all labelled it Cleve, by mistake. Of all these facts he was positive. The incident of the umbrella had impressed them on his memory; otherwise he did not suppose he should have retained a more distinct recollection of those two travellers than of the hundreds of others upon whom he attended daily.

This testimony shaped Saxon's course for him. He dismissed Davis, recompensed Bell, and by two o'clock was speeding away towards the west.

It was the down express; and yet how slowly the train seemed to go! Leaning back in a corner of the

carriage, he watched the flitting of the landscape, and listened to the eager panting of the engine with an impatience that far outstripped the pace at which they were going. He counted the stations; he counted the minutes, the quarters, the half hours, the hours. The five minutes' delay at Didcot, the ten minutes at Swindon, the ten minutes at Bristol irritated him almost beyond endurance. He had no eyes for the rich autumnal country. He saw not, or saw without observing, the "proud keep" of Windsor standing high above its antique woods; the silver-grey Thames, with its sentinel willows and wooded slopes; the fair city of Bath, seated amid her amphitheatre of hills; and Bristol, gloomy with the smoke of many furnaces. All he thought of, all he desired to see, all he aimed at now, was Clevedon.

Shortly after half-past five he reached Bristol. At half-past six he had arrived at his destination. There were flys and omnibuses waiting about the little station. He took a close fly, being anxious to avoid all danger of recognition, and desired to be driven to the best hotel in the place. There was but one, a large white house with a garden, overlooking the Bristol Channel. The day was waning and the tide was high on the beach, as Saxon stood for a moment among the flowering shrubs, looking over to the shadowy Welsh hills far away. The landlord, waiting at the door of the hotel to receive him, thought that his newly-arrived guest was admiring the setting sun, the placid sea with its path of fire, the little cove under the cliffs, and the steamer in the offing: but Saxon was scarcely conscious of the scene before him.

CHAPTER LI.

The Daughter of Ocean.

No Mr. Forsyth had been heard of at the Royal Hotel, Clevedon, and no lady whom any person belonging to the house could identify with Saxon's description of Helen Rivière. The head waiter, a middle-aged man of clerical aspect, suggested that the gentleman should send for Mr. Slatter. Learning that Mr. Slatter was the superintendent of rural police, Saxon at once despatched a messenger to request his presence; whereupon the clerical waiter respectfully inquired whether the gentleman had dined.

But Saxon had neither dined nor breakfasted that day, nor slept in a bed for four nights past; so he desired the waiter to serve whatever could be made ready immediately, flung himself upon a sofa, and overwhelmed with fatigue, fell profoundly asleep.

It seemed to him that he had scarcely closed his eyes when a strange voice awoke him, and he found the waiter shouting in his ear, the dinner on the table, and Mr. Inspector Slatter waiting to speak with him.

Mr. Slatter represented the majesty of the English law to the extent of some six feet three, and was a huge, bronzed, crisp-haired, keen-eyed giant, with a soft rich voice, and a broad Somersetshire accent. He had not heard of any Mr. Forsyth at Clevedon, and he was positive that no such name had been added to the visitors' list up at the Reading-rooms. He had, however, observed a lady in very deep black sitting alone on the Old Church Hill both yesterday and the day before.

Not having been on the hill himself, Mr. Inspector Slatter could not say whether the lady was young or old; but that she was "a new arrival," he did not doubt. She had not been on the hill to-day. He had passed that way half-a-dozen times, and could not have failed to see her if she had been there. As to finding out where this lady might be lodging, nothing was easier. Mr. Slatter would guarantee that information within a couple of hours.

So Saxon sat down to his solitary dinner, and Mr. Slatter departed on his mission. Rather before than after the expiration of two hours he came back, having ascertained all that he had promised to learn. Miss Rivière had indeed been at Clevedon. She arrived five days before, accompanied by a gentleman who returned to London by the next up-train, leaving her in apartments at Weston Cottage, down by the Green Beach. This very day, however, shortly after twelve, the same gentleman had come to fetch her away to Bristol, and they had left about two o'clock.

Saxon snatched up his hat, bade the inspector lead the way, and rushed off to Weston Cottage to interrogate the landlady. He was received in the passage by a gaunt spinster, who at once informed him that she was entertaining a party of friends, and could not possibly attend to his inquiries. But Saxon was quite too much in earnest to be daunted by grim looks and short answers; so, instead of politely requesting leave to call again at a more convenient opportunity, he only closed the door behind him and said: —

"I have but two or three questions to put to you, madam. Answer those, and I am gone immediately.

Can you tell me in what direction your lodger was going when she left here?"

"If you will call again, young man," began the landlady, drawing herself up with a little dignified quiver of the head, "any time after twelve to-morrow . . ."

"Gracious heavens, madam, I may be a couple of hundred miles hence by twelve tomorrow!" interrupted Saxon impetuously. "Answer me at once, I beseech you."

Protesting all the time that it was very extraordinary, very unreasonable, very inconvenient, the mistress of Weston Cottage then replied as curtly and disagreeably as possible to Saxon's questions. Miss Rivière and Mr. Forsyth had left her house at a little before two o'clock that afternoon. They took the twenty-three minutes past two o'clock train to Bristol. Where they might be going after that she could not tell. Having heard Mr. Forsyth mention the words "high tide," and "Cumberland Basin," she had guessed at the time that they might be about to continue their journey by water. This, however, was a mere supposition on her part, as she had only overheard the words by chance while passing the drawing-room door. Mr. Forsyth, she had understood, was Miss Rivière's guardian. He did not arrive unexpectedly. It had all along been arranged that he should return to-day to fetch Miss Rivière away; and the apartments were only engaged for one week. Some of Miss Rivière's luggage, indeed, had never been taken upstairs at all; and the rest was ready in the hall a good two hours before they went away. It was all labelled Bristol. Here the gaunt landlady's unwilling testimony ended.

By the time Saxon got back to the Royal Hotel it was close upon ten o'clock. The last train to Bristol had been gone nearly two hours, and he must now either take post-horses all the way, or drive to the Yatton junction, so as to catch the up-train from Exeter at fifty-five minutes past ten. Having taken counsel with Mr. Slatter, he decided on the latter as the more expeditious route, and in the course of a few minutes had paid his hotel bill, recompensed the inspector, and was once again on his way.

Then came the gloomy road; the monotonous tramp of hoofs and rumble of wheels; hedgerows gliding slowly past in the darkness, and now and then a house brimming over with light and warmth. Next, the station, with the up-train just steaming in; porters running along the platform; first-class passengers peering out cosily through close-shut windows; and the engine all glow, smoke, and impatience, panting for release. Here Saxon exchanged the dismal hotel fly for a warm corner in a dimly lighted railway carriage, and so sped on again till the train stopped at the Bristol station, where he alighted, jumped into a cab, and bade the driver take him to Cumberland Basin.

The way to this place lay through a tangled maze of narrow by-streets, over lighted bridges along silent quays, and beside the floating harbour thick with masts, till they came to an office close against a pair of huge gates, beyond which more masts were dimly visible. There were lights in the windows of this office, the door of which was presently opened by a sleepy porter, who, being questioned about the boats which had left Cumberland Basin that day, said he would call Mr. Lillicrap, and vanished. After a delay of several

minutes, Mr. Lillicrap came out of an inner room — a small, pallid young man, redolent of tobacco and rum, and disposed to be snappish. "Boats?" he said, "boats? Very extraordinary hour to come there asking about boats. Did people suppose that boats went out from the basin at midnight? Had any boats gone out that day? Absurd question! Of course boats had gone out. Boats went out every day. There had been a boat to Ilfracombe — that went at five; a boat to Hayle — at half-past three; one to Swansea — at half-past four; and the daily boat to Portishead at two. Any others? Oh, yes, to be sure — one other, the 'Daughter of Ocean,' for Bordeaux — not a fixed boat. Went about twice a month, and started today about four."

For Bordeaux! Saxon's pulse leaped at the name.

"The 'Daughter of Ocean' carries passengers of course?" he asked, quickly.

"Oh; yes, of course."

"And there is a regular steam-service, is there not, between Bordeaux and America?"

Mr. Lillicrap stared and laughed.

"To be sure there is," he replied. "The French service. But what traveller in his senses would go from Bristol to Bordeaux to get to New York, when he can embark at Liverpool or Southampton? Out of the question."

But Saxon, instead of arguing this point with Mr. Lillicrap, begged to know where he should apply for information about those passengers who had gone with the steamer that afternoon; whereupon Mr. Lillicrap, who was really disposed to be obliging despite his irascibility, offered to send the porter with him to a certain booking-office where these particulars might

perhaps be ascertained. So Saxon followed the man over a little drawbridge and across a dreary yard full of casks and packing-cases to another office, where, although it was so long past business hours, a pleasant kind of foreman came down to speak to him. The books, he said, were locked up, and the clerks gone hours ago; but he himself remembered the lady and gentleman perfectly well. The lady wore deep black, and the gentleman carried a large carpet bag in his hand. He recollected having seen the gentleman several days before. He came down to the office, and took the double passage and paid the double fare in advance. They came on board a little after three o'clock — it might be half-past three — and the "Daughter of Ocean" steamed out about a quarter-past four. If, however, the gentleman would come there any time after eight tomorrow morning, he could see the books, and welcome.

But Saxon had no need to see the books now. They could tell him no more than he knew already.

CHAPTER LII.

The Man of the People.

Although he left Bristol by the first morning express, Saxon yet found that he must perforce wait in town till evening before he could pursue his journey further. The early Continental Mail train was, of course, gone long ere he reached Paddington, and the next would not leave London Bridge till eight P. M. As for the tidal route *viâ* Boulogne, it fell so late in the afternoon that he would be in nowise a gainer by

following it. So he had no resource but to wait patiently, and bear the delay with as much philosophy as he could muster to his aid.

In the meanwhile, he was quite resolved to keep clear of his allies, and accept no aid from without. The clue which he now held was of his own finding, and the failure or success with which he should follow it up must be his own likewise. So he went neither to Lombard Street to learn if there were news of Lawrence Greatorex, nor to Chancery Lane to consult with Mr. Keckwitch, nor even to his club; but, having looked in at his chambers and desired the imperturbable Gillingwater to prepare his travelling kit and have his dinner ready by a certain hour, the young man thought he could not spend his "enforced leisure" better than by taking William Trefalden at his word, and learning from Mr. Behrens' own lips the true story of the Castletowers' mortgage.

The woolstapler's offices were easily found, and consisted of a very dreary, dusty, comfortless first floor in a dismal house at the farther end of Bread Street. On entering the outer room, Saxon found himself in the presence of three very busy clerks, a tall porter sitting humbly on the extreme edge of a huge packing case, a small boy shrilly telling over a long list of names and addresses, and a bulky, beetle-browed man in a white hat, who was standing in a masterful attitude before the empty fire-place, his feet very wide apart, and his hands clasped behind his back. Saxon recognised him at once, — keen grey eyes, iron-grey hair, white hat and all.

"Mr. Behrens, I believe," he said.

The woolstapler nodded with surly civility.

"My name is Behrens," he replied.

"And mine, Trefalden. Will you oblige me with five minutes private conversation?"

Mr. Behrens looked at the young man with undissembled curiosity.

"Oh, then you are Mr. Saxon Trefalden I suppose," he said. "I know your name very well. Step in."

And he led the way into his private room — a mere den some ten feet square, as cheerful and luxurious as a condemned cell.

"I must beg your pardon, Mr. Behrens, for introducing myself to you in this abrupt way," said Saxon, when they were both seated.

"Not at all, sir," replied the other, bluntly. "I am glad to have the opportunity of seeing you. You were a nine days' wonder here in the City, some months ago."

"Not for any good deeds of my own, I fear!" laughed Saxon.

"Why, no; but for what the world values above good deeds nowadays — the gifts of fortune. We don't all get our money so easily as yourself, sir."

"And a fortunate thing, too. Those who work for it are happier than those who only inherit it. I had far rather have worked for mine, if I could have chosen."

Mr. Behrens' rugged face lighted up with approbation.

"I am glad to hear you say so," said he. "It is a very proper feeling, and, as a statement, quite true to fact. I know what work is — no man better. I began life as a factory boy, and I have made my way up from the bottom of the ladder. I had no help, no

education, no capital — nothing in the world to trust to but my head and my hands. I have known what it is to sleep under a haystack and dine upon a raw turnip; and yet I say I had rather have suffered what I did suffer than have dawdled through life with my hands in my pockets and an empty title tacked to my name."

"I hope you do not think that I have dawdled through life, or ever mean to dawdle through it," said Saxon. "I am nothing but a Swiss farmer. I have driven the plough and hunted the chamois ever since I was old enough to do either."

"Aye — but now you're a fine gentleman!"

"Not a bit of it! I am just what I have always been, and I am going home before long to my own work and my own people. I intend to live and die a citizen-farmer of the Swiss Republic."

"Then, upon my soul, Mr. Saxon Trefalden, you are the most sensible young man I ever met in my life!" exclaimed the woolstapler, admiringly. "I could not have believed that any young man would be so unspoiled by the sudden acquisition of wealth. Shake hands, sir. I am proud to know you."

And the self-made man put out his great brown hand, and fraternised with Saxon across the table.

"I know your cousin very well," he added. "In fact, I have just been round to Chancery Lane to call upon him; but they tell me he is gone abroad for six weeks. Rather unusual for him to take so long a holiday, isn't it?"

"Very unusual, I think," stammered Saxon, turning suddenly red and hot.

"It's especially inconvenient to me, too, just at this

time," continued Mr. Behrens, "for I have important business on hand, and Keckwitch, though a clever fellow, is not Mr. Trefalden. Your cousin in a remarkably clear-headed, intelligent man of business, sir."

"Yes. He has great abilities."

"He has acted as my solicitor for several years," said Mr. Behrens. And then he leaned back in his chair, and looked as if he wondered what Saxon's visit was about.

"I—I wanted to ask you a question, Mr. Behrens, if I may take the liberty," said Saxon, observing the look.

"Surely, sir. Surely."

"It is about the Castletowers estate."

Mr. Behrens' brow clouded over at this announcement.

"About the Castletowers estate?" he repeated.

"Lord Castletowers," said Saxon, beating somewhat about the bush in his reluctance to approach the main question, "is — is my intimate friend."

"Humph!"

"And — and his means, I fear, are very inadequate to his position."

"If you mean that he is a drone in the hive and wants more honey than his fair share, Mr. Trefalden, let him do what you and I were talking of just now — work for it."

"I believe he would gladly do so, Mr. Behrens, if he had the opportunity," replied Saxon; "but that is not it."

"Of course not. That never is it," said the man of the people.

"What I mean is, that he has been cruelly hampered by the debts with which his father encumbered the estate, and . . ."

"And he has persuaded you to come here and intercede for more time! It is the old story, Mr. Trefalden — it is the story of every poor gentleman who cannot pay up his mortgage money when it falls due. I can't listen to it any longer. I can do no more for Lord Castletowers than I have done already. The money was due on the second of this month, and today is the seventeenth. I consented to wait one week over time, and on the ninth your cousin came to me imploring one week more. Lord Castletowers, he said, was abroad, but expected home daily. Money was promised, but had not yet come in. In short, one additional week was to put everything straight. I am no friend to coronets, as your cousin knows; but I would not desire to be harsh to any man, whether he were a lord or a crossing sweeper — so I let your friend have the one week more. It expired yesterday. I expected Mr. Trefalden all the afternoon, and he never made his appearance. I have called at his office this morning, and I hear that he has left town for six weeks. I am sorry for it, because I must now employ a stranger, which makes it, of course, more unpleasant for Lord Castletowers. But I can't help myself. I must have the money, and I must foreclose. That is my last word on the matter."

And having said this, Mr. Behrens thrust his hands doggedly into his pockets, and stared defiantly at his visiter.

Saxon could scarcely suppress a smile of triumph. He had learned more than he came to ask, and was in

a better position than if he had actually put the question which he was preparing in his mind.

"I think we slightly misunderstand each other, Mr. Behrens," he said. "I am here today to pay you the twenty-five thousand pounds due to you from Lord Castletowers. Do you wish to receive it in cash, or shall I pay it into any bank on your account?"

"You — you can pay it over to me, if you please, sir," stammered the woolstapler, utterly confounded by the turn which affairs were taking.

"I am not sure that I have quite so large a sum at my banker's at this present moment. But I will go at once to Signor Nazzari of Austin Friars, who is my stockbroker, and arrange the matter. If, therefore, I give you a cheque for the amount, Mr. Behrens, you will not present it, I suppose, before to-morrow?"

"No — not before tomorrow. Certainly not before tomorrow."

Saxon drew his cheque-book from his pocket, and laid it before him on the table.

"By the way, Mr. Behrens," he said, "I hear that you have built yourself a pretty house down at Castletowers."

"Confoundedly damp," replied the woolstapler.

"Indeed! The situation is very pleasant. Your grounds once formed a part of the Castletowers park, did they not?"

"Yes; I gave his lordship two thousand pounds for that little bit of land. It was too much — more than it was worth."

Saxon opened his cheque-book, drew the inkstand towards him, and selected a pen.

"You would not care to sell the place, I suppose, Mr. Behrens?" he said, carelessly.

"Humph! I don't know."

"If you would, I should be happy to buy it."

"The house and stables cost me two thousand five hundred to build," said the woolstapler.

"And yet are damp!"

"Well, the damp is really nothing so speak of," replied Behrens, quickly.

"Let me see; I believe Lord Castletowers sold a couple of farms at the same time — did you buy those also, Mr. Behrens?"

"No, sir. They were bought by a neighbour of mine — a Mr. Sloper. I rather think they are again in the market."

"I should be very glad to buy them if they are."

"You wish, I see, to have a little landed property over in England, Mr. Trefalden. You are quite right, sir; and, after all, you are more than half an Englishman."

"My name is English, my descent is English, and my fortune is English," replied Saxon, smiling.

The woolstapler nodded approval.

"Well," he said, "I have lately bought an estate down in Worcestershire, and I have no objection to sell the Surrey place if you have a fancy to buy it. It has cost me, first and last, nearly five thousand pounds."

"I will give you that price for it with pleasure, Mr. Behrens," replied Saxon. "Shall I make out the cheque for thirty thousand pounds, and settle it at once?"

The seller laughed grimly.

"I think you had better wait till your cousin comes back before you pay me for it, Mr. Trefalden," he said. "The bargain is made, and that's enough; but you ought not to part from your money without receiving your title-deeds in exchange."

Saxon hesitated and looked embarrassed.

"If you are afraid that I shall change my mind, you can give me fifty pounds on the bargain — will that do? People don't buy freehold estates in quite that off-hand way, you see, even though they may be as rich as the Bank of England; but one can see you are not much used to business."

"I told you I was only a farmer, you know," laughed Saxon, making out his cheque for the twenty-five thousand and fifty pounds.

"Ay, but take care you don't fling your money away, Mr. Trefalden. You're a very young man and, begging your pardon for the observation, you don't know much of the world. Money is a hard thing to manage; and you have more, I fancy, than you know what to do with."

"Perhaps I have."

"At all events, you can't do better than buy land; always remember that. I do it myself, and I advise others to do it."

"I mean to buy all I can get in my native Canton."

"That's right, sir; and if you like, I will inquire about those two farms for you."

"I should be more obliged to you than I can express."

"Not in the least. I like you; and when I like people, I am glad to be of service to them. You wouldn't be particular, I suppose, to a few hundreds?"

"I don't care what price I pay for them."

"Whew! I must not tell Sloper that. In fact, I shall not mention you at all. Your name alone would add fifty per cent to the price."

"I shall be satisfied with whatever bargain you can make for me, Mr. Behrens," said Saxon, and handed him the cheque.

The woolstapler shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I must give you receipts for these two sums," he said; but your cousin ought to be present on the part of Lord Castletowers. The whole thing is irregular. Hadn't you better wait while I send round to Chancery Lane for Mr. Keckwitch?"

But Saxon, anxious above all things to avoid a meeting with that worthy man, would not hear of this arrangement; so Mr. Behrens gave him two formal receipts in the presence of one of his clerks, pocketed the cheque, and entered Saxon's address in his notebook.

"As soon as I have any news about the farms, Mr. Trefalden," said he, "I will let you know."

And with this they shook hands cordially and parted.

"I'll be bound that open-handed young fellow has lent the Earl this money," muttered he, as he locked the cheque away in his cash-box. "Confound the aristocrats! They are all either drones or hornets."

In the meanwhile Saxon was tearing along Cheapside on his way to Austin Friars, eager to secure Signor Nazzari's services while the Stock Exchange was yet open, and full of joy in the knowledge that he had saved his friend from ruin.

About an hour and a half later, as he was walking slowly across the open space in front of the Exchange,

having just left the Bank of England, where he had found all his worst fears confirmed with respect to the stock sold out by his cousin in virtue of the power of attorney granted by himself five months before, the young man was suddenly brought to a pause by a hand upon his sleeve, and a panting voice calling upon his name.

"Mr. Saxon Trefalden — beg your pardon, sir — one half-minute, if you please!"

It was Mr. Keckwitch, breathless, pallid, streaming with perspiration, and almost speechless.

"One of our clerks, sir," he gasped, "'appened to catch sight of you — gettin' out of a cab — top of Bread Street. I've been followin' you — ever since he came back. Mr. Behrens directed me to Austin Friars — from Austin Friars sent on — to Bank. And here I am!"

Saxon frowned; for his cousin's head clerk was precisely the one person whom he had least wished to meet.

"I am sorry, Mr. Keckwitch," he said, "that you have put yourself to so much inconvenience."

"Bless you, sir, I don't regard the inconvenience. The point is — have you learned anything of the missing man?"

Saxon was so unused to dissemble that after a moment's palpable hesitation he could think of no better expedient than to ask a question in return.

"Have none of your emissaries learned anything, Mr. Keckwitch?"

"No, sir, not at present. I've had three telegrams this mornin' — one from Liverpool, one from Southampton, and one from Glasgow; all tellin' the same

tale — no success. As for Mr. Kidd he's taken the London docks for his line; but he's done no better than other folks up to this time. If, however, *you* have made any way, sir, why then we can't do better then follow your lead."

They were close under the equestrian statue of the Duke, when Saxon stopped short, and looking the head clerk full in the face, replied: —

"Yes, Mr. Keckwitch, I do know something of my cousin's movements, but it is my intention to keep that knowledge to myself. You can, if you please, put a stop to all these useless inquiries; for I shall now retain this matter solely in my own hands."

"Not excludin' me from assistin' you, sir, I hope?" exclaimed Keckwitch, anxiously. "Of course, if you have found a clue, and it's your pleasure to follow it yourself, that's only what you've a right to do; but I'm a man of experience, and I've done so much in the affair already . . ."

"I am obliged by what you have done, Mr. Keckwitch," said Saxon, "and I shall make it my business to recompense you for your trouble; but I have no further need of your services."

"But, sir — but, Mr. Saxon Trefalden — you can't mean to give me the go-by in this way! It ain't fair, sir!"

"Not fair, Mr. Keckwitch!"

"After my toilin' all the summer through, as I have been toilin' — after all the trouble I've taken, and all the money I've spent to worm out your cousin's ways — why, sir, you'd never have known even so much as where he lived, if it hadn't been for me!"

"Mr. Keckwitch," said Saxon sternly, "whatever

you may have done was done to please yourself, I presume — to satisfy your own curiosity, or serve your ends. It was certainly not done for me. I do not consider that you have any claim upon my confidence, or even upon my purse. However, as I said before, I shall recompense you by and by, as I see fit. Good morning."

And with this, the young man hailed a cab, desired to be driven to his chambers, and speedily vanished in the throng of Westward-bound vehicles, leaving the head-clerk boiling over with impotent rage and disappointment.

"Well, I'm cursed if that isn't a specimen of ingratitude!" muttered he. "Here's a purse-proud upstart for you, to step in and rob an honest man of his fair vengeance. Recompense, indeed! Damn his recompense and himself too! I hate him. I wish he was dead. I hate the whole tribe of Trefaldens. I wish they were all dead, and that I had the buryin' of 'em."

CHAPTER LIII.

At Fault.

Up and down, up and down, till his eyes wearied of the shipping and his feet of the *pavé*, Saxon wandered along the quays of the grand old city of Bordeaux, seeking vainly for any definite news of the "Daughter of Ocean." He had lost much precious time by the way — a night in Bristol, a day in London, another night in Bordeaux; but for this there had been absolutely no help. The early train that took him from Bristol to London arrived too late for the morning mail

to Paris, and the express from Paris to Bordeaux brought him into the antique capital of Guienne between ten and eleven at night. Armed, however, with the same strong will that had carried him along thus far, Saxon set to work to pursue his search as vigorously in Bordeaux as in London and Bristol, and, if possible, to make up for lost time by even greater perseverance and patience.

Up to this point he had held no further communication with Greatorex. He was determined to act for himself and by himself, without help or counsel. He would, perhaps, have found it difficult to explain why he shrunk from sharing the responsibility of this task — why, from that moment when he had first divined the share which Helen Rivière might bear in his cousin's flight, he had jealously kept the supposition to himself, and determined to follow up this accidental clue unaided and alone. But so it was. He felt that the girl's name was sacred; that his lips were sealed; that he, and he only, must seek and safe her.

He thought of her perpetually. He could think, indeed, of nothing else. Throughout the weary, weary miles of travel, by night, by day, sleeping or waking, the remembrance of her peril was ever before him. He had beheld her face but twice in his life; yet it was as vividly present to him as if he had been familiar with its pale and tender beauty from his boyhood. It wrung his very heart to think of her eyes — those pathetic eyes, with that look of the caged chamois in them that he remembered so well. Then he would wonder vaguely whether they had always worn that expression? — whether he should ever see them lighted up with smiles? — whether she had ever known the

joyous, thoughtless, sunshiny happiness of childhood, and had made her father's home musical with laughter?

Musing thus, while the unvaried flats of central France were gliding monotonously past the carriage windows, he would wander on into other and quite irrelevant speculations, wondering whether she remembered him? Whether she would know him again, if she met him? Whether she had ever thought of him since that day when they met at the Waterloo Bridge Station, and he paid her fare from Sedgebrook? And then, at the end of all these tangled skeins of reverie would always come the one terrible question — did she love William Trefalden?

He told himself that it was impossible. He told himself over and over again that heaven was just and merciful, and would never condemn that pure young soul to so fatal an error; but while he reasoned, he trembled.

Supposing that this thing had really come to pass — what then? What if they were already married? The supposition was not to be endured, and yet it flashed upon him every now and then, like a sharp pang of physical pain. He might put it aside as resolutely as he would, but it came back, and back again.

Whence this pain? Whence this anguish, this restless energy, this indomitable will that knew neither fatigue, nor discouragement, nor shadow of turning? These were questions that he never asked himself. Had they been put to him, he would probably have replied that he compassionated Helen Rivière from the bottom of his heart, and that he would have felt the same, and done as much, for any other innocent and helpless girl

in a similar position. It was pity. Pity, of course. What else should it be?

In this frame of mind, devoured by anxiety, and impelled by a restlessness that increased with every hour, the young man traversed the hundreds upon hundreds of miles between Bristol and Bordeaux, and now wandered eagerly about the far-spreading city and the endless quays, pursuing his scarch.

Of the "Daughter of Ocean," he ascertained that she had arrived in port and was unlading somewhere below the bridge. Sent hither and thither, referred from one shipping agent to another and confused by all sorts of contradictory directions, he had the greatest difficulty to find the steamer, and, when found, to gain a moment's hearing from those about her. Deserted, apparently, by her captain and crew, and given over to a swarm of blue-bloused porters, the "Daughter of Ocean" lay beside a wharf on the farther side of the Garonne, undergoing a rapid clearance. The wharf was obstructed with crates, bales, and packing cases; the porters came and went like bees about a hive; a French *commis* in a shaggy white hat, with a book under his arm and a pen behind his ear, stood by and took note of the goods as they were landed; and all was chatter, straw, bustle, and confusion. No one seemed able to give Saxon the least intelligence. The *commis* would scarcely listen to him, and the only person from whom he could extract a civil word was a fat Englishman in a semi-nautical costume, whom he found in the saloon of the steamer, immersed in accounts. This person informed him that the captain was gone to Perigueux, and that the passengers had all been landed yesterday at the Quai Louis Philippe. As to where

they might have gone after being once set ashore, that was nobody's business but their own. Perhaps it might be worth while to make inquiry at the passport office, or the English Consulate. He should do so himself if he were looking after any friends of his own.

So Saxon thanked the fat Englishman for his advice, and went to the Consulate. The Consul advised him to go to the Préfet, and the Préfet, after keeping him for more than an hour in a dismal waiting-room, referred him to the Superintendent of the city police. This functionary, a fussy, inquisitive, self-important personage, entered Saxon's name in a big book, promised that he would communicate with the authorities of the passport office, and desired Monsieur to call again to-morrow between two and four.

Thus the day dragged slowly by, and when at night he laid his weary head upon the pillow, Saxon felt as if he were farther off than ever from success.

The next day, Saturday, was spent in the same unsatisfactory way. He wasted all the forenoon in hunting out one Philip Edmonds, first mate of the "Daughter of Ocean," who was lodging at a little marine boarding-house on the opposite side of the river. This Edmonds at once remembered to have seen William Trefalden and Helen Rivière among the passengers. The lady was in deep mourning. They landed with the others at the Quai Louis Philippe. He had never spoken to either, and knew nothing of their ultimate destination. This was all that he had to tell.

Then Saxon went back to the quays, and inquired about the steamers that would sail next week for New York. He found that none had left Bordeaux since the "Daughter of Ocean" had come into port, and that the

first departure would take place on the following Tuesday. By the time that these facts were ascertained, it was late enough to go to the superintendent's office. Here, however, he was requested to call again to-morrow, the police having as yet been unable to come at any satisfactory results. The vagueness of this statement, and the air of polite indifference with which it was conveyed to him by a bland official in the outer office, convinced Saxon that he had little to expect from aught but his own unaided efforts. That night, having since early morning paced untiringly about the quays and streets and public offices of Bordeaux, he lay down to rest, almost in despair.

CHAPTER LIV.

Saxon strikes the Trail in a Fresh Place.

"WILL Monsieur have the goodness to write his name in the visitors' book?"

Saxon had finished his solitary breakfast and was looking dreamily out of the window of the salle-à-manger when the head waiter laid the volume before him and preferred the stereotyped request. Scarcely glancing at the motley signatures with which the page was nearly filled, the young man scrawled his own.

"*Tiens!*" said the waiter, as Saxon completed the entry under its various headings, "Monsieur is Swiss?"

"I am. What of it?"

"Nothing, Monsieur — except that Monsieur speaks with the purity of a Frenchman. There is a Swiss

Protestant chapel in Bordeaux, if Monsieur would wish to attend the service."

A new possibility suggested itself to Saxon's mind.

"Is there any English Protestant chapel?" he asked quickly.

"*Mais, certainement, Monsieur.* On the Pavé des Chantrons. One may see it from this window."

And the waiter pointed out a modest white building, about a quarter of a mile away.

Saxon's heart bounded with hope renewed. The English Protestant chapel! What more likely than that Helen should find her way thither, this sunny Sunday morning? What more probable than that the English chaplain should be able to help him? How dull he had been, not to think of this before! Finding that it yet wanted nearly two hours to the time when service would begin, and that the chaplain lived near by, Saxon went at once to wait upon him. An old woman, however, opened the door to him, and informed him with many curtsies, that her master was absent for six week's *vacances*, and that a strange gentleman had undertaken his duty in the meanwhile. As for the strange gentleman's name, she had not the remotest idea of it. It was "*un nom Anglais — un nom excessivement difficile.*"

"If you will direct me where to find him," said Saxon, "I can dispense with his name."

"*Mon Dieu,* M'sieur, he is staying at Drouay!"

"Where, then, is Drouay?"

"*Ah, c'est loin, M'sieur.*"

"What do you mean by far? How far?"

"More than three leagues, M'sieur. But he will

be here to perform the service at half-past ten, and M'sieur can see him after it is over."

Forced to content himself with this prospect, Saxon then chatted awhile with the garrulous old *femme de charge*, and learned that Drouay was a little village in the heart of the wine-country north of Bordeaux; that the strange clergyman, being in delicate health, was staying there till the vintage-time should come round and enable him to take the benefit of the grape-cure; that her own master was the best man in the world; that the chapel was *très laide;* that the attendance at this season was very scanty; that the voluntary contributions were much less than they should be, and so forth, till he succeeded in effecting his escape.

At length half-past ten o'clock came round. His thoughts were busy with the things of the world, and he felt that he had no power to abstract them. He felt that he could no more lay down his burthen upon that sacred threshold as he ought to lay it down, than he could lay down his personality; so he remained outside the door and watched the congregation passing in. But he watched in vain. Among the women came no Helen Rivière — among the men no William Trefalden. By and by, he heard the psalm-singing through the half-opened windows, and now and then a faint echo of the voice of the preacher. At length, after a service that seemed to him as if it would never end, the worshippers came out again and went their several ways. He then entered the chapel, begged the favour of five minutes' conversation with the officiating clergyman, and was shown into the vestry.

A fragile-looking young man of about six or seven and twenty received him politely, pointed to a seat,

and begged to know in what manner he could have the pleasure of being useful to him.

Saxon had no difficulty in telling his story. He had told it so often, and always with the same reservations on one or two points, that it now came to his lips with the readiness of an established formula.

He was in search of two friends who, he had reason to believe, had lately arrived in Bordeaux. The gentleman was a near relative of his own, and he was intimately acquainted with the family of the lady. Her name was Rivière. She was about seventeen or eighteen years of age, and dressed in deep mourning. He was the bearer of very important intelligence, and had travelled from England expressly to see these friends, if only he were so fortunate as to obtain some definite information respecting them. And then he concluded with an apology for the trouble that he was giving, and the time that his narrative occupied in the telling.

The clergyman, sitting with one hand over his mouth, and his eyes fixed attentively upon the ground, heard him to the end, and then, in a very quiet clear voice, said: —

"Will you oblige me with your name?"

"Certainly. My name is Trefalden."

"Is Trefalden also the name of your relative?"

Saxon hesitated.

"I do not think that he is travelling under that name," he replied, with some embarrassment.

"Do you mean, Mr. Trefalden, that your friend is travelling under an assumed name?"

"I mean — that is, I believe — he is travelling under the name of Forsyth."

The clergyman pressed his fingers nervously against his lips.

"This is strange," he said.

"If you know anything, for Heaven's sake do not hesitate to tell it!" cried Saxon, impetuously.

"I am bound to hesitate," replied the clergyman. "I do not know whether I ought . . ."

"If it be your duty to help the helpless and baffle the unrighteous, you ought — believe me, sir, you *ought* — to speak!"

The young clergyman looked at him fixedly, and after a moment's pause, replied: —

"I do believe you, Mr. Trefalden. I also believe that I am engaged to marry those two persons to-morrow at Drouay."

Saxon changed colour, opened his lips as if about to speak, checked himself, stood up, sat down again, and said at length in a low deep voice: —

"I am glad to find that I am in time."

"To be present at their wedding?"

"No — to prevent it."

The clergyman looked as if he had half-anticipated this reply.

"If I am to refuse to perform the ceremony, Mr. Trefalden, you must furnish me with an adequate reason," said he.

Saxon was sorely tried between his desire to screen the good Trefalden name, and the obvious necessity for stating his case plainly.

"If I place a great confidence in you," he said, presently, "will you promise not to betray it?"

"Unquestionably."

Saxon looked at him as if he would fain read his very heart.

"You are an utter stranger to me," he said; "but I think you are a man of honour. I will trust you."

And then, having looked out into the chapel and seen that there was no one within hearing, Saxon sat down and related all the story of his cousin's perfidy.

CHAPTER LV.

Mr. Guthrie's Testimony.

The clergyman's name was Guthrie. He was lodging at the house of a small propriétaire at Drouay, as the old femme de charge had said, for his health; and hither, according to the statement which he gave in return for Saxon's confidence, a gentleman came out from Bordeaux to visit him in the evening of the foregoing Wednesday — *i. e.*, the evening of the very day that the "Daughter of Ocean" landed her passengers at the Quai Louis-Philippe. This gentleman said that his name was Forsyth. The object of his visit was to engage Mr. Guthrie to perform the ceremony of marriage between himself and a lady then staying at the Hôtel de Nantes in Bordeaux. Mr. Guthrie arranged to marry them on the Saturday, and this matter disposed of, Mr. Forsyth, who was a remarkably pleasant person, made some observations about Drouay, and asked if there were any apartments to be had in the neighbourhood. He then added that the lady whom he was about to make his wife had lately lost a near relative, and would be glad to escape

from the noise and bustle of Bordeaux to so retired a spot. Mr. Guthrie then volunteered to accompany him to a little château near by, which was to be let furnished, and Mr. Forsyth engaged the first-floor on the spot. There was at first some little difficulty about the matter, as the propriétaire was unwilling to let any part of his house for less than one month; but Mr. Forsyth, who was apparently as rich as he was agreeable, offered a fortnight's rent in advance, and promised that, although the lady would probably not remain there more than a week, the whole month should be paid if her occupation of the rooms caused Monsieur le propriétaire to lose a more advantageous tenant. The next morning he escorted Miss Rivière to Drouay, installed her at the Château de Peyrolles, and having introduced her to Mr. Guthrie, and recommended her to that gentleman's care and attention, took his leave.

Mr. Guthrie had at that time no idea that his new acquaintances had only arrived in Bordeaux the day before; or that they had travelled direct from England. He first learned these facts from Miss Rivière. He was exceedingly surprised when she further informed him that they were about to proceed to New York by the next steamer leaving Bordeaux. If Miss Rivière had not spoken of their plans so simply, and been in such profound sorrow for the loss of her mother, he would have perhaps suspected a clandestine match; but as it was, he only wondered *en passant* at the oddity of their arrangements, and then dismissed the subject from his mind. On the Friday Mr. Forsyth came down to Drouay to call upon Miss Rivière, and, at her desire, postponed the marriage till Monday. It seemed to Mr. Guthrie that Miss Rivière was perfectly

willing to become the wife of Mr. Forsyth. The love was unquestionably on his side; but she seemed to hold him in the highest possible respect, and to look up to him in all things. Having so recently lost her mother, however, it was natural that the young lady should be anxious to wait as long as might be practicable before contracting this new tie. As the arrangement now stood, Mr. Guthrie was to perform the ceremony privately at the Château de Peyrolles on Monday afternoon, and the newly-married pair were to embark on board the American mail steampacket "Washington" for New York direct on Tuesday morning. Mr. Guthrie added that he had found himself much interested in Miss Rivière. He had lent her some books, called upon her several times, and done what he could to alleviate the monotony of her brief sojourn at Drouay. In the meanwhile Mr. Forsyth, through respect for her grief and her solitude, had with much delicacy kept aloof from the Château de Peyrolles, and had, in fact, only been down once from Bordeaux since Miss Rivière's arrival there. Mr. Guthrie believed that Mr. Forsyth had since then gone upon business to Angoulême.

And here the clergyman's testimony ended.

CHAPTER LVI.

The Château de Peyrolles.

A TINY, white building in the French mediæval style, with some six or eight glittering extinguisher turrets, a wholly unreasonable number of very small windows, and a weedy courtyard with massive wooden gates, was the Château de Peyrolles. The house was white; the jalousies were white; the gates were white. In short a more comfortless and ghost-like dwelling it would be difficult to find, even in the south of France. Built upon a slight — a very slight — eminence, it overlooked a wide district of vineyards; and stood islanded, as it were, in the midst of an endless green lake, which stretched away for miles on every side. Here and there rose a cluster of village roofs, surmounted by a landmark of church-spire; here and there the peaked roof of some stately château; but the villages were few and the châteaux far between. A long straight road, bordered on each side by tall poplars, swept through the heart of this district, passing close beside the gates of the Château de Peyrolles, and vanishing away into the extreme distance, like an avenue in a perspective drawing.

Along this road — the vines heavy with black grapes coming down in most places to the wayside, with now and then a patch of coarse pasture in between — Saxon drove from Bordeaux to Drouay that memorable Sunday afternoon. He had taken a light carriage and four good post-horses from his hotel, and so went over the ground at a brilliant pace. The Rev-

erend Angus Guthrie, having made his afternoon discourse of the very briefest, accompanied him. They spoke but seldom, exchanging now and then a word or two on the coming vintage, or the weather, which had become heavily overcast within the last two hours and threatened a storm: but as the road lengthened behind them, their observations became fewer, and then altogether ceased.

"This is Drouay," said the clergyman, after a silence of more than half-an-hour.

Saxon started and looked out of the window.

"And that little white building?"

"The Château de Peyrolles."

A strange feeling of agitation and reluctance came upon him.

"Now that it comes to the point," said he, "I feel like a coward."

"I do not wonder at it," replied Mr. Guthrie; "you have a painful duty before you."

"Still, you do not think she loves him?"

"I do not, indeed."

"I wish to heaven I could be sure of that!" said Saxon, earnestly; so earnestly that the young clergyman looked up at him like a man who is suddenly enlightened.

"In any case, Mr. Trefalden," he replied, "you could only do what you are now doing. Mercy under these circumstances would be cruel injustice. Shall we alight here? Perhaps it would be better than driving up to the château."

The postillions had pulled up before the door of the village auberge; so the travellers got out, and went up the private road on foot.

"You don't think it would come better from yourself, being a clergyman?" said Saxon, as Mr. Guthrie rang for admission.

The clergyman shook his head.

"Certainly not. I could only repeat what I have been told; you can tell what you know."

"True."

"But, if you prefer it, I will see Miss Rivière first, and prepare her for your visit."

"Thanks — thanks a thousand times."

An elderly woman opened the door, smiling and curtseying. Mam'selle, she said, was in the grande salon "*au premier;*" so Mr. Guthrie went up, while Saxon waited in a little ante-room on the ground-floor.

He was cruelly nervous. He tried to think what he ought to say, and how he ought to begin; but he could not put the words together in his mind, and when the clergyman came back at the end of ten minutes, it seemed to him as if he had not been absent as many seconds.

"I have given her your card," said Mr. Guthrie, "and told her that you are Mr. Forsyth's cousin. Go up to the first landing, and through the door that faces you as you ascend the stairs. I will wait here for you."

He went up, his heart beating painfully against his side; and then he paused a moment outside the door.

"I'd as soon be shot!" he muttered to himself as he turned the handle and went in.

CHAPTER LVII.

What Pity is Akin to.

He found himself in a small outer *salon* opening through wide folding-doors into a large room. A dark figure sitting beside an open window rose slowly at his approach, and a very low soft voice, in reply to his muttered salutation, bade him be seated.

"I trust," he said, "that Miss Rivière will pardon an intrusion which must seem unpardonable till it is explained."

"You are welcome, sir," she replied. "If only as Mr. Forsyth's relative . . . ."

She raised her eyes to his face for the first time, faltered, coloured crimson, and, after a moment's hesitation, added: —

"I think we have met before."

Saxon bowed profoundly.

"I believe," he said, "that I once had the honour of being useful to you for a few moments."

"You never gave me any opportunity of — of thanking you, Mr. Trefalden," she said, pressing her hands tightly together in her extremity of embarrassment.

"You gave me more thanks at the time, madam, than were merited by so trifling a service," replied Saxon; his self-possession all coming back to him at the sight of her timidity. "It seems strange that we should next meet in so very different a place."

"Very strange."

"But I had so much difficulty to trace you here, that I began to fear we should not meet at all."

"Do you come from Angoulême?"

"No; I have followed you from England."

"Indeed? I — I thought you had perhaps met Mr. Forsyth in Angoulême, and . . . ."

"My cousin does not know that I am in France," replied Saxon, gravely.

"How happy he will be to see you!"

Saxon looked down in silence.

"And — and he will be here in about an hour and a half," added Miss Rivière, with a glance at the pendule on the mantelshelf.

"This evening?"

"Yes. He returns to Bordeaux to-day, and will lodge to-night at the auberge in the village."

As she said this, Miss Rivière, surprised by the undemonstrative way in which Saxon received her information, again lifted her eyes for a moment.

"I — I hope there is nothing the matter," she said, anxiously.

Saxon hesitated.

"I cannot say that I am the bearer of good news," he replied.

"Oh dear, I am so sorry!"

"I am sorry too," said he; "more sorry than I can tell you."

The compassionate reluctance of his manner seemed to startle her.

"What do you mean?" she said, with evident apprehension.

"I mean that it grieves me to the soul to inflict the pain which my intelligence must give you."

"Must give *me!*" she faltered, looking for an instant quite white and scared. Then, smiling very

sadly, she shook her head, and turned her face away. "Ah no," she said; "that is all over."

"If I could indeed believe, Miss Rivière, that you would be indifferent to the tale I have to tell, my anxiety would be at an end," said Saxon, eagerly. "Will you forgive me if I ask you a very strange question?"

"I — I think so."

"Do you love my cousin?"

Miss Rivière turned a shade paler, and said with some dignity: —

"Mr. Forsyth is my best friend in the world — my only friend — and I honour him as he deserves to be honoured."

"But if he were *not* your best friend, Miss Rivière? If instead of doing you service, he had done you wrong? If that honour which you pay to him were utterly unmerited — what then? Nay, forgive me — I do not wish to alarm you; but I am here to-day to tell you terrible truths, and I now only implore you to listen to them patiently."

"I am quite willing to hear what you have to say, Mr. Trefalden," Miss Rivière replied; "but my faith in your cousin will not be easily shaken."

"My own faith in him was not easily shaken," said Saxon. "Like yourself, I believed him to be my friend."

"Of what offence do you accuse him?"

"He has robbed me."

"Robbed you?"

"Yes — of two millions of money."

Miss Rivière looked at him with a sort of incredulous bewilderment.

"Of money?" she faltered. "You say that he has robbed you of money?"

"I trusted him with two millions, and he has robbed me of every farthing," replied the young man, pitilessly direct. "Nor is this all. He has robbed your cousin, Lord Castletowers, of twenty-five thousand pounds more."

"Mr. Forsyth does not know Lord Castletowers."

"Mr. Forsyth may not know Lord Castletowers, but William Trefalden — William Trefalden, the attorney-at-law — knows him perfectly well."

"William Trefalden — who is he?"

"William Trefalden is Mr. Forsyth — William Trefalden is my cousin — William Trefalden is the man to whom Miss Rivière was about to give her hand to-morrow."

The young girl half rose from her chair, and Saxon could see that she was trembling from head to foot.

"I do not believe it!" she exclaimed. "It is monstrous — incredible!"

"It is true."

"What proof have you?"

"Not much; and yet, I think, enough to convince you. Do you know my cousin's handwriting?"

"Yes."

Saxon took a card from his purse, and laid it before her.

"Do you recognise it?"

"Yes — this is his hand."

"Read it."

The young lady read aloud: — "'*Mrs. Rivière, Beaufort Villa, St. John's Wood.*' What does this mean? We never lived at St. John's Wood."

"Yet that is the address which William Trefalden left at Brudenell Terrace, when you removed to Sydenham."

"That is very strange!"

Saxon produced a crumpled letter, and laid that also before her.

"Do you recognise his handwriting here as well?"

"Undoubtedly. Am I to read it?"

Saxon hesitated.

"It — it is his farewell letter to a poor woman he once loved," he said. "There is nothing in it that you may not read if you wish it."

Miss Rivière read, and returned it in silence.

"You observe the signature?"

"I do."

"You see that you have been imposed upon by a false name, and that others have been imposed upon by a false address?"

"Yes — I see it; but I do not understand..."

"Will you tell me how it was that you could not leave word with your landlady to what sea-coast place you were going when you left Sydenham?"

"Mr. Forsyth did not decide upon Clevedon till we reached Paddington."

"Can you tell me why you have been taken from London to Clevedon, from Clevedon to Bristol, from Bristol to Bordeaux, instead of embarking direct for the States from either Southampton or Liverpool?"

"I do not know — I was not aware that we were pursuing an unusual route."

"But you see it now?"

"I see that we have made an unnecessary détour; but I do not know why . . ."

"Permit me to tell you why. Because this journey is not the journey of an honest man, but the flight of a felon — a flight planned for months beforehand, and planned with no other end in view than to baffle inquiry and defeat pursuit. You leave Brudenell Terrace, and, thanks to the false address given, all trace of you is lost. You leave Sydenham, uncertain of your destination. You spend a few days at an obscure watering-place in the West of England, and then embark in a merchant steamer plying at uncertain dates between Bristol and Bordeaux. With what object? — simply that you may take your passage out to America from a French port, instead of sailing direct from London, Southampton, or Liverpool. In order to do this, you perform a tedious journey and lose many days by the way; while, had you started from Liverpool you would by this time have been within a few hours of New York. But then William Trefalden had committed a gigantic fraud, and he well knew that none of our great English ports were safe for him. He knew that my agents might be waiting for him at every point from which he would be likely to escape; but who would suspect him at Bristol? Who would confront him at Bordeaux? Who would arrest him as he landed, and say 'Give up the two millions you have stolen, and resign the lady you have wronged?'"

Miss Rivière listened, her eyes fixed, her lips parted, her face becoming gradually paler and paler, as Saxon, in the intensity of his earnestness, laid his facts and inferences one by one before her.

Then the young man paused, seeing that she was convinced, but grieved also to see at the cost of how rude a shock that conviction was purchased.

"These are cruel truths," he said; "but what can I do? *I must* undeceive you. I have tracked you from house to house, from city to city, for no other purpose than to save you from the fate to which you are devoting yourself; and now the minutes are going fast, and I am forced to speak plainly, or it will soon be too late to speak at all!"

Miss Rivière wrung her hands despairingly.

"Oh, mother! mother!" she cried piteously, "why are you not here to tell me what I ought to do?"

"You believe? You are convinced?"

"Yes — alas! I am convinced; but shall I forget that this man was my father's early friend — my mother's benefactor?"

"If William Trefalden told you that he was your father's early friend, Miss Rivière, it was as false as the name under which he made himself known to you!"

"Ah, you do not know all that he did to serve us! You do not know how he sought us out when we were in poverty, how he . . ."

"Pardon me — I *do* know it. He sought you out, because I gave him your card, and requested him to do so. He bought your father's paintings on my account solely; and he never saw Mr. Rivière in his life. I never meant to tell you; but this leaves me no option."

The young girl covered her face with her hands and wept silently. Her tears went straight to Saxon's heart. He felt an irrepressible desire to take her in his arms and tell her that he would give his life to comfort and protect her. But not daring to do this, he only said, in his simple, boyish way: —

"Pray don't cry. It makes me feel that I have been so cruel to you!"

But she made no reply.

"I cannot tell you," he went on, "what I have suffered in the thought of inflicting this suffering upon you. I would have borne the double share gladly, if I could. Do you forgive me?"

Still she wept on. He ventured a little nearer.

"I know how hard it is," he said, tenderly. "I have had to go through it all. He was my friend, and I thought he was the very soul of honour. I would hardly have believed it if an angel from heaven had told me that he would be false to his trust!"

"But he was my only friend!" sobbed the young girl. "My only friend in all the world!"

"No, no," cried Saxon, "not your only friend! Don't say that! Don't think it! Look up — look in my face, and see if it is not the face of a truer man and a truer friend than William Trefalden!"

And so, kneeling down before her to bring his face upon a nearer level, the young man touched her hands timidly, as if he would fain draw them away, yet dared not take them in his own.

"Do look at me!" he pleaded. "Only once — only for one moment!"

She lifted her face, all pale with tears, and glancing at him shyly, tremblingly, like a frightened child, saw something in his eyes which brought the colour back to her cheek in a flood of sudden scarlet.

"Oh, if I only dared to tell you!" he said, passionately. "May I? — may I?"

He took her hands in his — she did not withdraw

them. He kissed them; first one and then the other. He leaned closer — closer.

"I love you, Helen," he whispered. "Can you forget all this misery, and be my little wife? My home is in Switzerland, where I have a dear father who is a pastor. We are a simple people, and we lead a simple life among our flocks and pastures; but we are no traitors. We neither betray our friends nor deceive those we love. Tell me, darling, will you love me a little? Will you come and live with me among my own beautiful Alps, far, far away?"

She smiled. He took that smile for his answer, and kissed the lips that gave it; and then, for a few minutes, they laughed and cried and rejoiced together, like children who have found a treasure.

"You must wear this till I can get you a smaller one," said Saxon, taking a ring from his finger and putting it upon hers.

"It is very beautiful," said Helen. "What is it? — a crystal?"

"No, a diamond."

"A diamond! I did not think there were any real diamonds in the world so large as that!"

"I will give you a necklace of them, every one bigger than this."

"What are you, then? — a prince?"

"A citizen-farmer of the Swiss Republic."

"Then the Swiss are very rich!"

"Not they, indeed; but I am the richest man in the Canton Grisons, and my wife will be a great lady — as great a lady as her grand aunt, Lady Castletowers."

"Do you know Lady Castletowers?"

"Yes; her son is my most intimate friend. He is the dearest fellow in the world. You will be so fond of him!"

"I do not know any of my relations," said Helen, sadly, "except my Aunt Alethea — and she does not love me."

"She will find out that she loves you dearly when you wear your diamonds," laughed Saxon, his arm round her waist, and his curls brushing her cheek.

Helen sighed, and laid her head wearily against his shoulder.

"I do not want Lady Castletowers to love me," she said; "and I do not care for diamonds. I wish we were going to be poor, Saxon."

"Why so, Helen?"

"Because — because I fancy poor people are happier, and love each other better than rich people. My father and mother were very, very poor, and . . ."

"They never loved each other half so much as we shall love each other!" interrupted Saxon, impetuously. "I could not love you one jot more if I were as poor as Adam."

"Are you sure of that?"

"As sure as that I am the happiest fellow in all the world! But tell me, Helen, did you never care for William Trefalden? Never at all?"

Helen shook her head.

"I respected him," she said. "I was grateful to him."

"But did you not love him a little?"

"No."

"Not in the least?"

"Not in the very least."

"And yet you would have married him!"

"Think how lonely I was."

"That is true — poor little Helen!"

"And he loved me. He was the only person in all the world who loved me."

"Except myself."

"Ah, but I could not know that! When did you first begin to love me, Saxon?"

"I hardly know. I think ever since I found you were in danger of marrying William Trefalden. And you?"

"I shall not tell you."

"Nay, that is not fair."

"Indeed I will not."

"Then I shall conclude that you do not love me at all!"

"No, no!"

"Positively, yes."

She turned her face away, half crying, half laughing.

"You have been my hero," she whispered, "ever since the day of our first meeting."

Happy Saxon! Half wild with joy, he took her in his arms, poured forth a thousand follies, and almost devoured her little hands with kisses. In the midst of his raptures, the door opened and Mr. Guthrie came in; smiling, but apparently not much surprised by the spectacle before him.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I knocked twice; but you did not hear me. I fear you do not know how late it is. The good woman downstairs tells me that Mr. Trefalden has appointed to dine here this evening at seven, and it is already half-past six, with, I think, a storm coming up."

CHAPTER LVIII.

Brought to Bay.

With closed windows, lighted lamp, and curtains jealously drawn, Saxon Trefalden and Mr. Guthrie sat together, ominously silent, in the larger *salon* of the Château de Peyrolles. On the table were placed pens, paper, and ink. The ante-room was left in darkness, and the folding-doors between stood a little apart. All was very still — in the house no voice, no footfall, no sound of life; out of doors, nothing but the weary moaning of the wind, and the creaking of the weather-cocks upon the turrets overhead.

They were waiting for William Trefalden.

Miss Rivière had withdrawn to her chamber, partly to escape all sight or hearing of the coming interview, and partly to make such slight preparation as might be necessary before leaving the château; the clergyman having promptly volunteered to find her a temporary asylum with the family of an English merchant settled at Bordeaux. It was therefore arranged that the carriage should be in readiness at the back entrance shortly after seven o'clock; and then, as soon as was practicable, they were all three to hasten back to Bordeaux as fast as Saxon's post-horses could carry them. In the meanwhile the appointed hour came and went; the two men waited, and still no William Trefalden made his appearance.

Presently the pendule on the mantel-shelf chimed the quarter.

Mr. Guthrie looked at his watch. Saxon rose, went

over to the nearest window, pushed aside the curtain, and looked out. It was now dusk; but there was still a pale, lurid gleam upon the horizon, by the light of which the young man could see the great clouds rolling together overhead, like the mustering of many armies.

"It will be a wild night," he said, as he resumed his chair.

"Hush!" replied the clergyman. "I hear wheels."

They listened; but the vehicle came along at a foot-pace, and went slowly round by the yard at the back of the château.

"It is only our own post-chaise," said Saxon.

And then they were again silent.

Five minutes; ten minutes; a quarter of an hour went by, and the pendule chimed again. It was now half-past seven.

All at once, Saxon held up his hand, and bent his head attentively.

"I hear nothing," said the clergyman.

"I hear a carriage and pair — coming very quickly — from the direction of Bordeaux!"

Mr. Guthrie smiled doubtfully; but Saxon's trained ear could not be deceived. In another moment the sound became faintly audible, then grew gradually louder, and ceased at last before the gates of the château.

Saxon looked out again.

"I see the carriage outside the gates," he said. "They are opened by a boy carrying a lanthorn. He alights — he pays the driver — he crosses the court-yard — the carriage drives away. He is here!"

With this he dropped the curtain, and turned

down the lamp, so as to leave the room in half-shadow, while Mr. Guthrie, in accordance with their pre-concerted plan, went out into the dark ante-room, and took up his station close against the door.

Presently they heard William Trefalden's voice chatting pleasantly with the housekeeper in the hall, and then his footsteps on the stairs. Outside the door, he seemed to pause for an instant, then turned the handle and came in. Finding himself in the dark, he deposited something heavy on the floor, and, guided by the narrow line of light between the folding-doors, moved towards the second *salon*. As he did this Mr. Guthrie softly locked the door and put the key in his pocket. Slightly as the sound was, the lawyer heard it.

"What's that?" he said, quickly, and stopped half-way.

He listened, holding his breath the while; then sprang forward, threw the doors open, and passed into the adjoining room.

As he did so, Saxon turned on the full light of the table-lamp, and the two men stood suddenly revealed to each other face to face.

"At last — traitor!"

A frightful pallor — that deadly pallor which is born, not of fear but of hatred — spread itself slowly over William Trefalden's countenance, and there remained. No other sign betrayed the tumult within. Haughty as an Indian at the stake, he folded his arms, and met his cousin's eye unflinchingly.

Thus they stood for a second or two, both silent. Then Mr. Guthrie came in from the ante-room, shut the folding-doors, and took his seat at the table; while

Saxon resumed his former place, and, pointing to a chair standing apart from the rest, said: —

"Please to sit there, William Trefalden."

The lawyer, with a sharp glance of recognition at the clergyman, flung himself carelessly into the chair.

"May I ask what this means?" he said, contemptuously. "An amateur Star-chamber?"

"It means justice and retribution," replied Saxon, sternly.

Mr. Trefalden smiled, leaned back in his chair, and waited for what should come next. He knew that all was over. He knew that his fairy gold had turned to withered leaves, and that the paradise of his dreams had suddenly vanished away, leaving in its place only the endless desert and the burning sands. He knew that the edifice which he had been rearing month after month, with such consummate skill, was shattered to dust — that the die on which he had staked reputation, country, personal safety, and his whole worldly future, had turned up a blank at the very moment when he believed the prize his own. He knew that Helen Rivière would never, never, now be wife of his; would never grace his home and gladden his heart with her smiles; never learn to give him love for love, in all the weary years that were to come! He knew that from this time forth he was a marked man, a branded felon dependent on the mercy of the kinsman whom he had betrayed; and yet, knowing all this, his self-command never wavered, his eye never quailed, his voice never faltered for an instant. He was desperate; but his pride and his courage were at least equal to his despair.

Saxon, sitting at the head of the table with his head leaning on his hand, looked down for some moments in silence.

"I have not much to say to you, William Trefalden," he began presently; "and what little I have to say must be said briefly. To reproach one who could act as you have acted would be idle. If you had any heart to be touched, any sense of honour to be awakened, neither you nor I would be sitting here to-night."

Still smiling scornfully, the lawyer listened, apparently with the greatest indifference.

"To keep, then, to plain facts," continued the young man, "you have defrauded me of two millions of money; you have that money in your possession; you are at this moment my prisoner; and I have but to call in the aid of the village police, and convey you to Bordeaux in the carriage which now waits below for that purpose. Such is your position, and such is mine. But I am unwilling to push matters to extremity. I am unwilling to attach public scandal to the name which you are the first of our family to disgrace. For my uncle's sake and my own, and from respect to the memory of many generations of honest men, I have decided to offer you a fair alternative."

He paused and referred to a slip of paper lying beside him on the table.

"In the first place," he continued, "I require you to restore the money of which you have robbed me. In the second place you must sign a full confession of your guilt, both as regards the two millions stolen from myself and the twenty-five thousand pounds of which you have defrauded the Earl of Castletowers. In the third place you must betake yourself to America, and

never again be seen on this side the Atlantic. If you agree to these conditions, I consent to screen you from the law, and will give you the sum of one thousand pounds to help you forward honestly in the new life before you."

"And supposing that I decline the conditions," said Mr. Trefalden calmly. "What then?"

"Then I simply ring this bell, and the boy who just now opened the gates to you will at once summon a couple of *sergents de ville* from the village."

The lawyer only elevated his eyebrows in the least perceptible degree.

"Your decision, if you please."

"My decision?" replied Mr. Trefalden, with as much apparent indifference as if the subject under consideration were the binding of a book or the framing of a picture. "Well — it appears to me that I am allowed no freedom of choice."

"Am I to undertand that you accept my conditions?"

"I suppose so."

"Where, then, is the money?"

"In the adjoining room. You have but to take possession of it."

"Mr. Guthrie rose, fetched the carpet-bag, and placed it on the table.

"Your keys, if you please."

William Trefalden produced three small keys on a ring, and handed them to the clergyman.

"You will find the money excellently invested," he said, looking on with unruffled composure while the bag, the deed box, and the cash box were successively opened. The contents of the last were then turned out

upon the table, and Mr. Guthrie, with a view to ascertaining whether the whole sum was actually there represented, proceeded to examine each item separately. But he found, after a very few minutes, that the attempt was fruitless. The notes and specie offered no difficulties, but of notes and specie there was, comparatively, but a small proportion, while the bulk of the booty consisted of securities of the value of which he could form no opinion, and precious stones which it would have needed a lapidary's knowledge to appraise.

"I confess," he said, "that I am wholly unequal to the task of verifying this money. It needs a better man of business than myself."

"Then it must go unverified," said Saxon, taking up rouleaux and papers as they came, and thrusting them back again, pell-mell, into the box. "I am no man of business myself, and I cannot prolong this painful investigation beyond to-night. We will go on to the declaration."

"If you will tell me what you wish said, I will draw it up for you," said Mr. Guthrie.

Saxon then whispered his instructions, and the clergyman's pen ran swiftly over the paper. When it was all written, he read the declaration aloud.

"I, William Trefalden, of Chancery Lane, London, attorney-at-law, do acknowledge and confess to having obtained the sum of two millions sterling from my cousin, Saxon Trefalden, of Switzerland, with intent to defraud him of the same; and I confess to having deceived him with the belief that I had invested it for his use and advantage, in the shares of a certain supposititious Company, which Company had no actual existence, but was wholly invented and imagined by

myself to serve my own fraudulent ends. I also confess to having invested those two millions in such foreign and other securities as I conceived would turn to my own future profit, and to having fled from England with the whole of the property thus abstracted, intending to escape therewith to the United States of America, and appropriate the same to my own purposes.

"I likewise confess to having, two years since, received the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds from my client, Gervase Leopold Wynneclyffe, Earl of Castletowers, which sum it was my duty to have straightway paid over into the hands of Oliver Behrens, Esq., of Bread Street, London, for the liquidation of a mortgage debt contracted by Lord Castletowers some four years previously; but which sum I did, nevertheless, appropriate to my own uses, continuing to pay only the interest thereof, as heretofore, in the name of my client.

"And I allege that this confession, both as regards the offence committed by me against my cousin, Saxon Trefalden, of Switzerland, and as regards the offence committed by me against my client the Earl of Castletowers, is in all respects substantially and absolutely true, as witness my signature, given in presence of the under-mentioned witnesses, this twenty-second day of September, Anno Domini eighteen hundred and sixty."

Mr. Guthrie, having read the statement through, passed it across the table. William Trefalden, still leaning back carelessly in his chair, affected to smile at the lawyer-like way in which the clergyman had rounded his sentences, but, as the reading proceeded, frowned, and beat his heel impatiently upon the polished floor.

Saxon pushed the inkstand towards him.

"Your signature," he said.

The lawyer rose — took up a pen — dipped it in the ink — hesitated — and then, with a sudden movement of disdain, flung it back upon the table.

"You have your money," he said impatiently. "What more can you want?"

"I require the evidence of your guilt."

"I cannot — will not sign it. Take your money, in God's name, and let me go!"

Saxon rose, pale and implacable; his hand upon the bell.

"The alternative lies before you," he said. "Sign, or I give the signal."

William Trefalden cast a hasty glance about the room, as if looking for some weapon wherewith to slake the hatred that glittered in his eye; then, muttering a fierce oath between his teeth, snatched up the pen, and, as it were, dug his name into the paper.

"There, curse you!" he said, savagely. "Are you satisfied?"

Mr. Guthrie affixed his own signature as witness to the confession, and Saxon did the same.

"Yes," the young man replied, "I am satisfied. It only remains for me to fulfil my share of the compact."

And he selected Bank of England notes to the value of one thousand pounds.

The lawyer deliberately tore them into as many fragments.

"I would die a dozen deaths," he said, "sooner than owe a crust to your bounty."

"As you please. At all events, you are now free."

Hereupon Mr. Guthrie rose, took the key from his

pocket, and unlocked the outer door. The lawyer followed him. On the threshold he turned.

"Saxon Trefalden," he said, in a low, deep, concentrated tone, "if ever man hated man, I hate you. I hated you before I ever beheld you, and I have hated you with a tenfold hatred from the hour when we first met face to face. Remember that. Remember that my deadly curse will be upon you and about you all the days of your life — upon your children, and upon your children's children — upon your marriage-bed, and your death-bed, and your grave. There is no sorrow, no disease, no shame, that I do not pray may embitter your life, and blast your name in this world — no extremity of despair and anguish which I hope may not fall to your portion in the next. Take this for my farewell."

There was something frightful in the absence of all passion and fury, in the cold, calm, deliberate emphasis with which William Trefalden uttered this parting malediction; but Saxon heard it with a face of solemn pity and wonder, and looked at him steadily from the first word to the last.

"May God forgive you as I do," he then said devoutly. "May God in his infinite mercy forgive you and pity you; and soften your heart, and not visit these curses upon your own unhappy head."

But William Trefalden was already gone, and heard no word of his cousin's pardon.

CHAPTER LIX.

Gone!

STEADILY, sternly, William Trefalden went down the broad stone stairs and into the hall. Here the housekeeper, coming from the empty dining-room, and wondering what great trouble was in the house, started at the sight of him, as if he were a ghost. He passed her as he would have passed a tree by the roadside, took his hat mechanically, and went out. At the gates he paused. The key was on the inside; but he fumbled with it confusedly, and could not turn the lock. The housekeeper, looking after him with a sort of vague terror, called to Jacques to open the gates for Monsieur: whereupon Jacques, clattering across the yard in his *sabôts*, came running, lanthorn in hand, and turned the key in an instant.

Monsieur passed out into the lane, like a man in a dream, and having gone a few steps, stood still and leaned against the wall. The wind blew fiercely, bringing heavy drops of rain with it every now and again; but of this he seemed unconscious. Then he went slowly down the lane and out upon the high road. To the right lay Bordeaux, a good ten miles away; to the left bordering the road for some little distance on either side, but lying for the most part somewhat back among the vineyards, came the village. He stopped, walked a few yards in this direction, a few yards in that, and then stopped again, feeling faint and stunned, and all unlike himself.

It was a case of reaction, mental and physical. He

had gone through a terrific ordeal, and it had now begun to tell upon him, body and brain. Dimly conscious of this, he tried to collect his thoughts — tried to consider what it was that he wanted to do, and which way he should go next. Then he suddenly remembered that he had been travelling since noon, and had not dined that day. He would go to the auberge in the village, and there get some food and some brandy — above all, some brandy. It would put life into him; steady him; lift this weight from his brain, and restore him to himself.

Acting upon this instinct, he made his way to the "Lion d'Or." Two old peasants chatting over their half-bottle of red wine in a corner of the public room, looked up as he came in; and the master of the house recognising the English Monsieur, who was to occupy his best bedchamber that night, left his game of dominos and rose respectfully. Did Monsieur desire to see his room? The room was quite ready, and he thought Monsieur would be content with it. Could Monsieur have refreshment? Without doubt; Monsieur could have whatever refreshment he pleased — a cutlet, an omelette, a dish of ham, a fowl even, if Monsieur did not object to wait while it was cooked. Good; a cutlet — a cutlet, and some cognac. He had excellent cognac; Vieux Cognac, if Monsieur indeed preferred it to wine. Monsieur should be served immediately. The cutlet would not take five minutes to prepare. In the meanwhile would Monsieur be pleased to occupy this small table by the window.

William Trefalden dropped into the chair placed for him by the landlord, and there sat in a kind of stupor — his hat on, his elbows resting on the table,

his chin supported on his hands. His hair and clothes were damp; his feet were deadly cold; his teeth chattered; but of all this he was wholly unconscious. He only knew that he felt crushed and paralysed; that he wanted to think of something and had no power to do so, that the brandy would put him straight — the brandy! the brandy!

He called for it impatiently, and while the landlord went to fetch it, fell to wondering again what the thing was that he failed so strangely to remember. It tormented him — it haunted him. He seemed ever on the point of seizing it, and, failing to seize it, groped about in a kind of mental darkness that was inexpressibly painful.

Then the brandy came — about a quarter of a pint in a tiny decanter, accompanied by a liqueur glass equally diminutive. He pushed the glass angrily aside, poured the whole of the spirit into a tumbler, and drank it at a draught. It went down his throat like fire; but he had no sooner swallowed it than the pressure on his brain was relieved. After a few moments, he felt warmer, steadier. Then his thoughts cleared suddenly. He remembered all that had happened; and with memory came back the whole flood of rage, grief, hatred, love, despair!

He knew now what the thought was — that vague thought which had so oppressed and eluded him a few moments since. It was vengeance.

Ay, vengeance. Bitter, deadly, terrible vengeance — vengeance swift and bloody! He told himself that he would have it, be the cost what it might. He would give his own life for it willingly, and count it cheaply purchased. The word mounted to his brain, throbbed

in his pulse, tingled in his ears, mastered and took possession of him, like a fiend.

He knew that he must plan his vengeance quickly. It must be planned, prepared, executed at once. The blow must fall as suddenly and fatally as the shaft of the lightning. How was this to be done? With what weapon?

The landlord came bustling in with a pile of covered plates in his hands and a napkin under his arm. Monsieur's dinner. Monsieur would find that the cook had done her best at so short a notice. Here was a little soup; here also were cutlets, fried potatoes, and a dish of beans. The omelette would be ready for Monsieur as soon as Monsieur was ready for the omelette.

But William Trefalden was in no state to do justice to the fare before him. He tasted the soup, and pushed it aside. He tried to taste the meat, but set the morsel down without putting it to his lips. The brandy had supplied him with a factitious strength that caused him to loathe the sight and smell of solid food. One thing he took, however, from the dinner-table — a knife.

He watched his moment and slipped it up his sleeve when no one was observing him. It was a short black-handled knife, worn to an edge on both sides — a knife that was to all intents and purposes a dagger.

This done, he rapped impatiently for the landlord, bade him remove the dishes, and called for more brandy.

The landlord was distressed beyond measure. Was not the soup to Monsieur's taste? Were not the cutlets tender? Would not Monsieur permit him to bring the omelette? Hélas! was Monsieur finding himself ill?

Would Monsieur choose a cup of tea? More cognac? Good. Monsieur should have it immediately.

The cognac was brought, and he drank again eagerly; this time from a wine-glass. The craving for it was irresistible. It was a second-rate spirit, more fiery than strong; but it stimulated him; spurred him to his purpose; nerved his arm and quickened his brain. For all this, he was not intoxicated. He felt that he could drink a bottle of it without producing that result. So he drank, and drank again; and as he drank, the fire coursed through his veins till at last he felt that he could sit there, brooding and silent, no longer.

He rose and went out hurriedly. The two old peasants shook their heads over their wine and looked after him. *Diable!* There was surely something strange about the man. Was he ill? Or mad? Or had he drunk too much cognac? Bah! was he not an Englishman, and used to it? Englishmen, look you, *mon voisin*, drink cognac like water!

The rain was now driving furiously before the wind, and sweeping down the road in great gusts before which the poplars moaned and shivered like living things. What with the sudden shock of cooler air, and what with the fever in his blood, the lawyer reeled at first meeting the wind and rain, and could scarcely keep his feet. But this was only for a moment. He recovered himself instantly, and, fighting his way in the teeth of the storm, crept under the lee of the houses till he came to the side road leading to the Château de Peyrolles. He found it with difficulty, for the night was pitch-dark and the rain blinding. On the high road where all was open it was yet possible to

see a few feet in advance; but here in the lane, shut in by trees and high walls on both sides, he could only feel his way along like a blind man.

At length he came upon the gates. They were again locked upon the inside. He tried them — tried to slip his hand between the bars and turn the key in the lock; but the bars were too close, and he could not get his fingers far enough. Then he stopped, clinging to the gate with both hands, and staring in. The darkness was so intense that he could not distinguish the outline of the house; but he saw lights still burning in some of the rooms. One in an upper chamber especially fixed his attention. Was that window hers?

Oh! the passion, the despair, the desperate longing that seized upon him at this thought! If he could but see her once again! — see her; speak to her; touch her hand; tell her how, though false to all the world beside, he had been true at least to her from first to last! He felt that he had never half told her how he loved her. He had never even kissed her — never once; for his respect had been as profound as his love, and he had not dared to claim the smallest privilege of a lover from one so young, so helpless, so bereaved. He felt now that he would give his soul to clasp her in his arms and press his lips to hers. Good God! how he loved her! How his heart hungered for her!

He shook the gates with all his might — strove to clamber over them — flung himself against them; but in vain. Then he pressed his face against the bars, like a prisoner at the prison-gate, and, sobbing, called upon her name. But his voice was borne away

by the wind, and the pitiless rain drove in his face and mingled with his tears.

While he was yet clinging there in the darkness with his eyes fixed upon the upper window, the light suddenly vanished. He had made so certain that it was her light and her window that the disappearance of that little spark fell upon him like a blow. He felt as if the last link were now broken between them — the last hope gone.

Almost at the same moment, he saw a lanthorn (carried apparently by an invisible hand) moving across the upper end of the courtyard. Again he shook the gates, and shouted furiously. The lanthorn paused — moved on — paused again; and at last came quickly towards him. Then the bearer held it high above his head with one hand, shaded his eyes with the other, and asked roughly — "*Qui est là?*"

It was Jacques — the same Jacques who had let him out an hour or two before, and who, recognising his voice, again unlocked the gates and admitted him.

"*Tiens!*" said he. "They are all in bed *là bas.*"

William Trefalden's heart leaped with fierce exultation.

"No matter," he replied. "My visit is to the gentleman. Tell me where he sleeps. That is enough."

"What gentleman, M'sieur?"

"He who came to-day with the English curé. Quick! Time presses, and my business is urgent."

"But the strange gentleman is no longer here. He went away about half an hour after Monsieur."

"Went away!"

"Yes, M'sieur — in a cabriolet with four horses,

taking Monsieur le Curé and the young lady with him."

"Dog, it is a lie! — a lie, and you are paid to tell it! Give me the truth — the truth this instant, or I strangle you!"

And, half beside himself, the lawyer twisted his hands in the lad's collar as if he meant what he said.

"Ah, Monsieur! — for the love of God, Monsieur! — it is indeed the truth — if you kill me for it, it is the truth!"

"Where is Madame Bouïsse?"

"Gone to bed, M'sieur!"

"Then wake her — tell her I must see her. If she were dying, I must see her. Do you hear?"

"Yes, M'sieur."

Trembling from head to foot, Jacques picked up the lanthorn which he had dropped in his extremity of terror, and led the way into the house. They went straight to the housekeeper's chamber, where William Trefalden thundered at the door as if he would bring it down. Madame Bouïsse made her appearance, well-nigh startled out of her wits, and wrapped in the counterpane of her bed.

It was quite true — undeniably true. The young Englishman was gone, and had taken mam'selle with him. They left about twenty minutes or half-an-hour after Monsieur took his departure. Madame Bouïsse believed they were gone to Bordeaux. Monsieur was free to search the house if he chose; but he would assuredly find that she, Madame Bouïsse, was not deceiving him. They were gone.

Gone!

Without waiting to hear or utter another word, he

snatched the lanthorn from the boy's hand and rushed up-stairs. From suite to suite, from floor to floor, through empty rooms yet full of the evidences of recent occupation, down again, out of the house, and across the court-yard, shivering the lanthorn to fragments on the wet stones as he reached the gates! Then he paused, turned, lifted up his hands in the darkness, heaped curses on the place, and raged against it impotently, like a madman.

Till now he had been comparatively calm. Busy with his scheme of vengeance, he had put restraint upon his words, and even to a certain degree upon his looks. But now — now he no longer attempted to curb the fire within — now the lava-tide of rage and hate welled-up and overflowed, and bore him along, unresisting.

Gone!

Impelled by an instinct that seemed to take the place of sight, he ran down the lane and out upon the high road. The "Lion d'Or" was now closed for the night; but he battered fiercely at the door till it was opened. The landlord, sleepily obsequious, ventured to remark that Monsieur was late, but William Trefalden interrupted him at the first word.

"I must have a cabriolet and post-horses," he said. "At once — do you hear?"

The landlord shook his head.

"*Mon Dieu*, Monsieur!" he said, "the 'Lion d'Or' is not a posting-house."

"But you have horses?"

"None, Monsieur."

"Then where can I get them? Quick — quick, for your life!"

"Nowhere in Drouay, Monsieur."

"But is there no farmer, no shop-keeper, no creature in the place who can be found to drive me to Bordeaux? I will pay anything. Fool! do you understand? — *Anything!*"

But the landlord only shrugged his shoulders and protested that not a soul in Drouay would be induced to undertake the job at such an hour, and in such weather.

The lawyer clenched his teeth, and stamped with rage.

"Then I must walk," he said. "Give me some brandy before I go."

The landlord held up his hands in feeble expostulation. Walk! Great heaven!. Walk three leagues and a half in this terrible storm! Let Monsieur only listen to the rain — listen to the wind — think how dark it was and how lonely! Besides, Monsieur was wet through already.

But Mr. Trefalden broke in with a fierce oath, and bade the man hold his peace and bring the brandy instantly.

Then he poured out half a tumblerful, drank it recklessly, flung a napoleon on the table, and rushed out again into the storm.

He was now utterly beside himself — his brain reeling, his blood on fire, his whole frame throbbing with fever and fury. The landlord of the "Lion d'Or," thankful to be rid of him, shut and barred the door, and went straightway up to bed, resolved not to admit him again under any circumstances. In the meanwhile he seemed to have lost sight of his determination to walk to Bordeaux, and went raving and gesticulating

up and down the village, where all, except himself, were sleeping quietly.

Thus pacing to and fro like a caged beast, he suddenly became aware of the approach of a travelling carriage. On it came, thundering through the one straggling street of Drouay, with flaring lamps, steaming horses, splash and clatter of wheels, and the loud cracking of the postilion's whip. He ran to meet it — he shouted — he implored to be taken up — he would pay any price only to stand upon the step, if they would let him! But the postilion took him for a beggar, and shook his whip at him; and the travellers inside, cut off from him by windows opaque with damp, and deafened by the rattle of their own wheels and the pelting of the rain upon the carriage-roof, neither saw nor heard him. Still he ran beside it, panting and shouting — tried to clutch at the traces, but, receiving a savage lash across the hands, fell back and made a desperate effort to spring up behind. But all in vain. He missed his hold; the carriage swept on, and left him there despairing.

Still, still he ran, fated, irresponsible, headlong — now stumbling among the sharp flints in the road — now getting up with hands all cut and bleeding — now pausing to take breath — now fancying he could still hear the retreating wheels; and so, drenched, giddy, breathless, his hat gone, his face and clothes disfigured with mud and rain, rushing blindly on again!

Each moment the storm increased and the wind rose higher, till at last it culminated in a terrific hurricane. Then the thunder came up in heavy peals, and the lightning burst over the plain in rapid flashes, and the wind tore up the vines by the roots, and

whirled them wildly away, with all their vintage promise, towards the sea. Yet still, urged forward by that fierce thirst which blood alone could slake, with murder in his heart and madness in his brain, William Trefalden ran — fell — struggled to his feet — staggered on again — fell again — and so for miles and miles!

Next morning early, when the storm-clouds were drifting off raggedly towards the west with now and then a gleam of uncertain sunshine between, a party of peasant folk coming up from the way of Medoc found the body of a man lying face downward in a pool by the road-side. His clothes, face, and hands were torn and blood-stained. He had a watch upon his person, and in his waistcoat pocket a portemonnaie full of bank-notes and napoleons. No letters, no cards, no token by which it might be possible to identify him, could be discovered upon the body. His very linen was unmarked.

The honest country-folk laid this nameless corpse across one of their mules, and brought it charitably into the dead-house at Bordeaux. Having lain there unclaimed for forty-eight hours, it was buried in the new cemetery beyond the walls, with a small black cross at the head of the grave, on which the only inscription was a row of numerals. His watch, his money, and his clothes were awarded by the préfet to the poor of the parish in which the body was *found*.

EPILOGUE.

THE world knows the Italian story by heart. How Garibaldi entered Naples: how, at Della Catena, he saluted Victor-Emmanuel as King of Italy; how he sheathed his sword when the great work was so far done, and went back to his solitude at Caprera, are facts which need no recapitulation. Had one man lived but a few months — nay, a few weeks — longer, the tale might perchance have ended differently. Where we now read Florence we might have read Rome, for 'Regno d'Italia' on printed stamp and minted coin, a word of broader significance and more antique glory. But the ideal Republic died with Giulio Colonna, and was buried in his grave.

In the meanwhile, Olimpia's life became a blank. Her father had been the very light of her inner world. Bred in his political faith, trained in his employ, accustomed to look up to him, to work with him, to share his most secret councils, his wildest hopes, his fears, his errors, and even his personal dangers, she seemed to lose the half of her own soul when he was snatched from her. Then came the sudden change of programme — a change to her so bewildering, so unworthy, so fatal! Mistrusting Sardinia and scorning

the very name of a Constitutional Italy, Olimpia conceived that her father's memory was insulted in this compromise; and so, in the bitterness of her resentment and grief, withdrew herself altogether from the work in which her life had been spent. Avoiding all with whom she had laboured and acted in time past, and keeping up no more than the merest thread of intercourse with even those whom she was used to call her friends, she then made her home at Chiswick, in the quiet house to which Saxon had conducted her on the evening of their arrival in London. Here she lived solitary and apart, cherishing her sorrow, mourning the great scheme unachieved, and learning that hard lesson of patience which all enthusiasts have to learn in this world sooner or later.

Not thus Lord Castletowers. Too English, too unprejudiced, and it may be added too sensible, to attach paramount importance to the mere shibboleth of a party, he welcomed the settlement of Italian affairs with a heartiness that he would perhaps scarcely have ventured to express very loudly in the presence of Colonna's daughter. Where she refused to recognise any vital difference between a Constitutional government and a pure Despotism, he was far-sighted enough to look forward to that free and prosperous future which most thinking men now prophesy for the kingdom of Italy, nor was he slow to perceive that there might be hope for himself in the turn that matters had taken. The Italian question thus far solved, Italy would no longer need so much support from her well-wishers. With a liberal monarch at the head of the nation, a parliament to vote supplies, and an army to defend the national territory, the whole system of patriotic

black-mail levying, and special pleading of every description, must necessarily collapse. Olimpia would therefore no longer feel herself bound to sacrifice her hand to "one who could do more for Italy" than himself. So the Earl loved and hoped on, and wisely bided his time.

Wisely, too, he applied himself in the meanwhile to the improvement of his own wordly position. Occupying his friend Saxon's vacant chambers in St. James's Street, he devoted himself to his parliamentary duties with a zeal that drew upon him the attention of one or two very noble and influential personages. Having made a couple of really brilliant speeches during the spring session of 1861, and happening to be upon the spot when a man of ability and tact was needed at a moment's notice, he had the good fortune to be entrusted with a somewhat delicate and difficult mission to one of the German potentates.

The Earl, as a matter of course, acquitted himself perfectly; and began thenceforth to be talked of among his elders as "a rising man." Then the Duke of Doncaster smiled graciously upon him, and several of the Cabinet Ministers fell into the way of asking him to their political dinners; and the end of it all was, that just before the setting in of the long vacation, Gervase Leopold Wynneclyffe, Earl of Castletowers, found himself inducted one fine morning into a very neat little vacancy in the Perquisite Office, where the work was light and the salary heavy, and the chance of promotion considerable. Then, and not till then, he ventured to renew his suit to Olimpia Colonna.

The moment was favourable. A year of mourning

had passed over her head, and the intense solitude of heart which had been at first her only solace now began to weigh painfully upon her. She had had time to think of many things — time to live down some errors and outlive some hopes — time also to remember how long and well the Earl had loved her; how worthy he was of all the love that she could give him in return; how he had shed his blood for her Italy; and with what devotion he had performed the last sad duties of a son towards her father's ashes. Besides all this, her occupation was gone. She could no longer immolate herself for Italy, for the simple reason that Italy was satisfied to rest awhile upon her present gains, and preferred being left to settle her own affairs in a quiet Constitutional way. The disaster at Aspromonte convinced Miss Colonna of this truth, and of the stability of the new *régime*. And over and above all these considerations, Olimpia loved the Earl. She had loved him all along — even when she refused him; and now, after a whole year of sorrow, she loved him better than before. So she accepted him — accepted him very frankly and simply, as a true woman should, and promised to be his wife before the ending of the year.

Secure in the consciousness of her splendid birth, Olimpia never dreamed for one moment that Lady Castletowers could be other than content and happy in this new alliance of their houses. That the proud Alethea Holme-Pierrepoint would in this solitary instance have been prepared to sacrifice blood for gold — nay, would have actually welcomed a Miss Hatherton with her two hundred and fifty thousand pounds more gladly than a portionless Colonna, — was a possibility that

could by no chance enter within the sphere of her calculations. So when Lady Castletowers came over to see her the next day in her humble suburban home, and kissed her on both cheeks, and said all the pretty and gracious things that the mother of her betrothed husband was bound, under the circumstances, to say, Olimpia accepted it all in perfect faith, nor guessed a bitter disappointment lay hidden beneath that varnish of smiles and embraces. The Earl, having himself borne the brunt of her Ladyship's displeasure, was, it need scarcely be said, careful to keep the secret very close indeed.

In the meanwhile Saxon Trefalden had gone back to Switzerland; and there, despite the urgent remonstrances of those dear friends who missed his little dinners and his inexhaustible cheque-books, persistently remained. In vain did the Erectheum lift up its voice in despair; in vain did Blackwall lament and Richmond refuse to be comforted, and Italian prima donnas sigh for banquets and bracelets gone by. The boyish, laughing, lavish millionnaire was fairly gone, and declined to come back again. The syrens might sing; but Odysseus only stopped his ears and sailed by unheeding.

The Earl alone knew that he was married; but even the Earl knew no more. He felt it to be somewhat hard that his friend should neither have invited him to his wedding, nor have taken him in any way into his confidence upon so important a matter. He could not but be conscious, too, that there was something strange and secret about the whole proceeding. Who had he married? Was the bride pretty or plain? Rich or poor? Dark or fair? Gentle or simple?

What was her age? Her name? her rank? her nation?

In reply to the first announcement of his friend's marriage, the Earl had ventured delicately to hint at two or three of these inquiries; but as Saxon limited his rejoinder to the fact that his wife was "an angel," Lord Castletowers naturally felt that the statement was hardly so explicit as it might have been.

On all other points Saxon was frank and communicative as ever. He laid his every project before his friend as unreservedly in his letters as if they two had been sitting face to face over the fire in the smoking-room at Castletowers, or leaning side by side in the moonlight over the taffrail of the "Albula." They were delightful letters, filled to overflowing with all kinds of general detail: now telling of the new château which was already in progress; now of the bridge just built at Ostenstein, or the road to be made between Tamins and Thusis; now describing a national fête at Chur, or an entertainment at the Château Planta; now relating all about the cotton-mills which Saxon was erecting in the valley, or the enormous pasture tracts lately purchased and the herds of Scotch cattle imported to stock them; now giving a sketch of the design just received from the architect at Geneva for that church at Altfelden on which Pastor Martin's heart had been set for the last thirty years — keeping the Earl constantly *au courant*, in fact, of every particular of his friend's busy and benevolent life among the simple people of his native canton.

At length it was the Earl's turn to announce the happiness so shortly to be his; and then Saxon wrote

to entreat that the newly-married pair would extend their wedding-journey as far as the Valley of Domleschg, and be his guests awhile. "My wife," he said, "desires to know you, and my uncle loves you already for my sake. On your wedding-day you will receive a parcel of papers, which you must accept as a souvenir of your friend."

The "parcel of papers" proved to be the title-deeds of the two farms sold to Mr. Sloper, and the title-deeds of Mr. Behrens's "box" and grounds at Castletowers. The farms were worth from ten to twelve thousand pounds apiece, to say nothing of the "fancy price" which Saxon had paid for the wool-stapler's property. It was not a bad present, as presents go, and it made a rich man of the Earl of Castletowers; but he little thought as he wrung Saxon's hand when they next met at Reichenau, that to the man who had presented him with that princely wedding-gift he owed not those farms alone, but Castletowers itself — Castletowers itself, with the [redacted] oaks of which he was so proud, and the rare old [redacted] in which his forefathers had lived and died for [redacted] turies before him. That was the one secret that [redacted] never confided to him — not even when, [redacted] gether under the apple-trees at the foot of the [redacted] hill, he related the story of his own [redacted] cousin's perfidy, and of the fate from which [redacted] terposed to save Helen Rivière.

"And that," he said, "was how I [redacted] know her — how I came to love her [redacted] her. I brought her home at once to [redacted] yonder. My uncle adored her from [redacted] and she adored him. I was almost [redacted]

I should have been jealous, if it hadn't made me so happy. When she had been living here for about a month or five weeks, we came up one morning, all three together, to this little chapel upon the hill, and my uncle married us. There was no one present but Kettli and the organ-blower. After my uncle had blessed us and the ceremony was all over, we embraced and bade him adieu, and walked along the Thusis road till the cabriolet overtook us; and so we were married and went away, and no soul in Reichenau knew it till we were gone. We were so happy!"

"It is a strange story," said the Earl, "and a pretty story; and the best part of it is that you and I are cousins, Saxon, after all!"

"Nay," replied Saxon, grasping his friend's hand in both his own, "it is not much to be only cousins when we have been brothers so long!"

A word remains to be added respecting the other moiety of the great Trefalden Legacy; that moiety which, according to the will of the testator, was to be bestowed in the endowment of a great charity, chiefly for the benefit of "decayed tradesmen, mercantile men, ship-brokers, stock-brokers, poor clergymen, and members of the legal and medical professions, and the widows and orphans of each of those classes respectively." For the accommodation of these widows and orphans, the will went on to direct that a plot of freehold ground should be purchased, and that "a suitable and substantial building" should be erected thereon under the superintendence of "some eminent architect;"

and this building was to be called "THE LONDON BENEVOLENT TREFALDEN INSTITUTION."

It is delightful to know that all this will certainly be done — some day. The money fell due on the twenty-second of March, 1860, and the sum then transferred to the credit of the trustees amounted to just four million seven hundred and seventy-six thousand two hundred and odd pounds. Since that time the exertions of the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Corporation have been beyond all praise. To say that they have either thought much, or done much, up to the present date, would perhaps be premature; but they have eaten an incalculable number of dinners on the subject, which to the civic mind means precisely the same thing. At these dinners they generally entertain a certain "eminent architect," which "eminent architect," being retained at a splendid salary for just so long as the works shall remain in progress, is naturally and laudably anxious to devote his life to the task. He therefore submits a plan now and then, or the modification of a plan, to the intelligent after-dinner criticisms of his honourable employers; and in that position the building-question now stands.

What site that "suitable and substantial building" is destined to occupy, how much it will cost, what it will be like, and at what remote period in the future history of the world it may probably be completed, are questions which the present generation is advised not to consider too curiously. No intelligent and unprejudiced person can doubt, of course, that when the ground is bought, and the building is built, and the bills are all paid, and the dinners are all eaten, and the resident curator, clergyman, physician, secretary,

house-keeper, and servants of the establishment are salaried on a scale befitting the spendour of the foundation, there will yet remain something for the "DECAYED TRADESMEN, mercantile men, ship-brokers, stock-brokers, poor clergymen, and members of the legal and medical professions, as well as for the widows and orphans of each of those classes respectively." In any case, however, the claims of these insignificant persons will not have to be considered in our time; how, then, can we do better than eat, drink, and be merry, after the enlightened fashion of our honourable friends, the Trefalden Trustees, and so leave the future to take care of itself?

THE END.

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